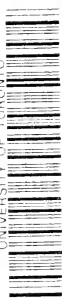


UNIVERSITY OF TORONTO



3 1761 00285051 9

Ex Libris



PROFESSOR J. S. WILL.

THE FIVE GREAT SKEPTICAL DRAMAS
OF
HISTORY

ABERDEEN UNIVERSITY PRESS.

THE
FIVE GREAT SKEPTICAL DRAMAS
OF
HISTORY

BY THE LATE

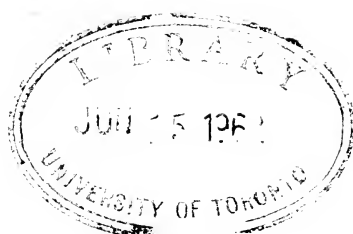
JOHN OWEN

AUTHOR OF "SKEPTICS OF THE ITALIAN RENAISSANCE," "SKEPTICS OF THE
FRENCH RENAISSANCE," ETC., ETC.



LONDON
SWAN SONNENSCHN & CO., LIMITED
NEW YORK: G. P. PUTNAM'S SONS

1896



798418

PREFACE.

A LIFE-LABOUR expended on thinkers of a special type, combined with a survey of *all Literature* from the standpoint of the same thought, might not unreasonably be expected to make discoveries and induce results of a peculiar kind. Without anticipating any *a priori* harmony or providential relation, so to speak, between the labour and its outcome, the philosophical thinker may feel no small gratification at observing how much greater and richer and how much more important his scheme of thought is than he had anticipated. Contemplating, for example, the history of skeptical free-thinkers as a department of philosophy in which less labour had been spent than it seemed to deserve, the author of the following pages was struck with the remarkable fact that just as the greatest thinkers have been of a skeptical kind, so all the dramas that have most impressed themselves on the minds of men have been dramas whose subjects and characters have pertained to skeptical free-thought. In a word, all the greatest dramas and dramatic plots in all ages of the world have been of this class.

Thus the greatest of Greek plays, the master-work of the greatest of Greek dramatists, is without doubt the "Prometheus Bound" of Aeschylus; the noblest of Bible-books, that is, with a dramatic plot and character, is unquestionably the Book of Job; the greatest play of England's, and of the world's, great dramatist has been the "Hamlet" of Shakespeare; and the noblest drama of the most famous of modern poets has been the "Faust" of Goethe; while the problem of the "Faust" has again been considered by Calderon from a more strictly Roman Catholic point of view in the most striking of all his dramas "El Magico Prodigioso". No dramas have attracted so much attention—each in its special environment of time and circumstance—as these five. None have been taken as manifesting so adequately the intellectual and spiritual idiosyncrasy of their

writers—none have enjoyed so great a popularity as representing the character of the writer, as well as that of his nation, as each of these great plays has done.

Now a brief reflection may serve to suggest that these dramas, starting from the same standpoint, and resembling each other's plot and evolution so closely, must needs possess matter of exceeding interest for all thinkers and schools of thought.

First, they prove that the problems and difficulties with which men have coped through all time are essentially the same: Prometheus in opposition to the Olympian Deities; the Patriarch Job in antagonism to the Hebrew Jahve; Faust and the Wonder-Working Magician contending with the Deity of the modern world and with the laws by which he endeavours to rule it—all are vindicators of the self-same issue—protagonists in the self-same battle. They occupy the same standpoint of inherent justice, and of automatic mental independence, of self-determining reason and conscience; they commence from the self-same starting-point; they employ largely the same arguments; they arrive mostly at the same conclusions. In a word, the contest is the same—humanity set in array against the dread powers of the universe,—which has engaged the attention of the noblest minds whose speculations are recorded in human history; a contest contemporaneous with the growth of reason, instinct with its life and attributes, and bound to endure as long as reason and humanity are destined to last—in other words, to the eternity of man and whatever is eternal and divine in his speculation and aspiration.

A word of exception may perchance be thought needful for Hamlet as one of the five skeptical thinkers. In harmony with a nationality which, starting from that of its author and nation, is far more *practical* than speculative, his doubt is largely concerned with action. He recognises the compulsion in the laws of the universe and in human enactments. His hesitation and fear to act are based on the difficulties inherent

in the circumstances of his own life-problem. In point of fact, he combines speculation with practical doubt, but it is in the direction of action that he finds his actual conclusions. His final justice is mainly accidental; he decides the practical issues of his life by a sort of ethical fluke. If in the issue he kills himself, it is no more than the logical issue of his doubting course of life. The problem he aims to solve is doubt in action—this far more than doubt in speculation—but even here the reasons he appealed to are not unlike those of speculative doubters, and so far much of his reasoning illustrates, and is illustrated by, the arguments of other skeptical free-thinkers. "To be or not to be," to think or not to think, to act or not to act, are only cleverer phases of human problems, all of them beset with, if not identical at least with, similar difficulties, and demanding, not perhaps the same, but analogous methods of consideration and resolution.

Separated by centuries of time, by long ages of linguistic advance or retardation, by infinite degrees of human culture and civilisation, by continents and oceans of terrestrial space, man is found in every condition of existence propounding the same problems, coping with the same or analogous difficulties. The world drama in which he is engaged is always alike in plot, and his *rôle* is ever the same in aim and character. Nor is its outcome dissimilar. From the whole history of the past, from the world dramas in which the noblest characters have essayed to choose and play their parts, we have the importance, the divine sacredness, of freedom of thought and independence of conscience. The heroes of human thought and action resemble each other in this: they stand firm in the conviction of a mysterious superior justice that rules the universe; they are persuaded of the truth as being both infinite and eternal, that, with all his difficulties, man finds in reason and conscience the weapons best adapted for establishing his rightful claims and position in a universe of which reason and conscience constitute the supreme law and rule.

THE PROMETHEUS VINCTUS

OF

AESCHYLUS

MOTTOES.

Πάντα θεοῖς ἀνέθικαν Ὅμηρός θ' Ἡσίοδος τε
ὅσσα παρ' ἀνθρώποισιν ὀνείδεα καὶ ψόγος ἐστίν.

ὥς πλείστ' ἐφθέγγξαντο θεῶν ὑθεμίστια ἔργα
κλέπτειν μοιχεύειν τε καὶ ἀλλήλους ἀπατεύειν.

XENOPHANES.

Das gemeine Menschenschicksal, an welchem wir Alle zu tragen haben, muss denjenigen am schwersten aufliegen, deren Geisteskräfte sich früher und breiter entwickeln. Wir mögen unter dem Schutz von Eltern und Verwandten empor- kommen . . . so ist doch immer das Final dass der Mensch auf sich zurückgewiesen wird, und es scheint, es habe sogar die Gottheit sich so zu dem Menschen gestellt das sie dessen Ehrfurcht, Zutrauen und Liebe nicht immer, wenigstens nicht gerade im dringenden Augenblick, erwielen kann."

GOETHE, *Wahrheit u. Dichtung*, Book xv.

*Know ye not me
The Titan? He who made his agony
The barrier to your else all-conquering foe.*

SHELLEY, *Prometheus Unbound*, Act i.

*Ich dich ehren? Wofür?
Hast du die Schmerzen gelindert
Je des Beladenen?
Hast du die Thränen gestillet
Je des Geängsteten?
Hat nicht mich zum Manne geschmiedet
Die allmächtige Zeit
Und das ewige Schicksal
Meine Herrn und deine.*

GOETHE, *Prometheus*.

IN the investigation of mythological subjects no inquiry is more difficult than that which relates to their age and their origin. Other things being equal, the measure of antiquity possessed by any myth may be accepted as a presumption that its subject matter is a generally accepted belief, or else denotes a widely received experience on the part of humanity. For the very fact of our knowledge of its antiquity postulates not only the existence but the overt perhaps repeated expression of such a belief during a very long period, and in myths as in other matters we must acknowledge the operation of some such law as that called "The survival of the fittest". Another mark of a generally received myth consists in its variants. The same rudimentary conceptions are found to underlie an almost inexhaustible variety of forms. Thus most of the great myths—*e.g.*, the solar myth—are found in the traditions of all those races which have attained sufficient culture and continuous existence to possess any traditions at all. A myth in fact may be likened to a musical theme evolved and expressed by the earliest races of the world, which their descendants have surrounded with variations and accompaniments which, while serving to elaborate, disguise more or less its original features. Or it might be termed the cosmopolitan alphabet—the primary rudiments—of the religious thought of humanity, for beneath the surface of all the great world-faiths may be discovered a substratum of mythology. But perhaps the most striking evidence that a myth embodies a widely accepted truth or belief is found in its ready assimilation and expression by varying, perhaps even discordant, modes of thought. Like a useful metal it is made to subserve an almost infinite variety of purposes, being taken up, reconstructed and employed by many different departments of human intellectual energy. For a myth is not, as once was supposed, a consolidated uniform tradition—a petri-

fied deposit of human faith or experience—possessing always the same definite outlines and homogeneity of substance. Nothing indeed could be more contrary to truth. A myth is a kind of molluscous versatile product of human experience and imagination. It is therefore a plastic material, capable of being moulded by any environment within which it is received. Starting into life as a crude, fanciful expression of some frequently recurring natural phenomenon, it may assume a number of subsequent Protean forms. Thus it may be held to express an historical event, a fact of natural history, a generalisation of social experience, a characteristic of some ethical law or a quality of the speculative intellect. This mobility does not of course mean that the belief expressed by the myth is necessarily true. It implies only that it has long formed a part of the intellectual or imaginative currency of mankind, and that it has thereby become invested with authority and human interest. We observe precisely the same mobility of form in other matters of profound concernment or interest for large sections of humanity, quite irrespectively of any truth they may be supposed to possess. Thus in the dogmas of any historical religion and in the fables—themselves mythical in their origin—which form such a large portion of the early oral tradition of all ancient races, we recognise a similar susceptibility to new forms, the readiness to assume under varying circumstances diverse modes of presentation. Still less does it mean that the significance of a myth will be the same in all its stages of evolution. On the contrary, the variety of its forms will be some, albeit not infallible, testimony to a corresponding divergency in its meaning. The myth, for example, which in a primæval condition of any people has only a concrete physical significance, may with the intellectual progress of such a people attain to higher interpretations, and may become the chosen exponent of historical, scientific, or even metaphysical and spiritual truth. An obvious corollary from this premiss is that the significance of a myth, taking it as a whole, must needs be of a diversified character, even if, as is sometimes the case, the formal variation between its different stages be not very great or distinctive.

Now the myth of Prometheus exemplifies all the qualities I have just enumerated. Firstly, it is one of the most ancient in

the whole compass of Greek mythology ; secondly, it is a principal member of a large class of similar myths ; and, thirdly, it has entered into various provinces of Hellenic thought, and has thereby assumed a corresponding divergency of forms and meanings.

1. The antiquity of the Prometheus myth is shown, firstly, by the prominent position which it occupies in the authoritative depository of old Greek belief—the works of Hesiod. Here we find not only that the myth is already an accepted part of ancient Hellenic faith, but that it has assumed a peculiarly elaborated form, that it has become encrusted with accretions from other myths more or less related with itself. Nor is this all ; we find on close examination that it goes back to a time anterior to the first settlement of the Pelasgi and other primitive Aryan tribes in Greece, nay, according to some writers to a period prior to the great Aryan migration from Central Asia. In its main outlines we undoubtedly find traces of the myth in the ancient literature of all the chief Indo-Germanic races. Its especial connection with India is marked by the Sanscrit derivation of the word Prometheus, for this, following the vicissitudes of the myth itself, is not derived, as the Hellenes thought, from Greek roots signifying “ foresight,” but from the Sanscrit term *pramantha* or *pramathyus*, employed to designate the primitive Indian instrument for kindling fire.¹ Of still greater importance is the connection of the myth with Semitic legends. Its marked affinity, for example, with the Hebrew narrative of the creation has long been acknowledged by commentators of every school of thought, and is indeed too obvious to be denied. Some have attempted to account for this similarity by supposing that the myth formed part of the common tradition of the Indo-Germanic and Semitic races at a prehistoric period before they were divided, while others, with perhaps more probability, explain it by supposing that the early Pelasgian settlers in Greece may have learned the tradition from the Phœnicians.² In either case the origin of the myth may be said to transcend the limits of human history. Incidentally, too, this remote antiquity seems confirmed by its

¹ Comp. Kuhn, *Herabkunft des Feuers*, etc., p. 18, and *passim*.

² This is the view of Petersen. See his article on Greek Mythology in Ersch and Gruber, *Encykl.*, sec. i., vol. lxxxii., p. 96.

direct reference to the creation of man. This is true, no matter whether the myth be regarded as having a physical and natural or a metaphysical and moral origin, for in the first case one form of the legend makes Prometheus the creator of the first man, whom he made of clay and animated with celestial fire stolen for the purpose, while in the second he bestows on men the divine gift of reason or intelligence by the same agency of stolen fire—the latter being a secondary stage in human evolution, which all ancient records represent as following closely on the creation of man.

2. But the myth of Prometheus is only one form of a somewhat large group of myths. Indeed it is a noteworthy fact in mythology that all the more significant and comprehensive myths are found in groups of greater or less extent, thus attesting, as we might indeed have anticipated, the action of a number of minds upon a phenomenon or truth-presentation possessing the same general features for all alike. We have a remarkable fact of the same kind in the linguistic syntheses which are so frequently alike in languages of varying races and of different degrees of culture. Thus the Prometheus myth is a member of what might be termed the Titanic or anti-celestial class in Greek mythology. All of these, whatever their difference of local origin, particular elaboration, etc., possess similar characteristics. This will readily be seen by a brief enumeration of the chief of them. We have, for example, the myths of Atlas the brother of Prometheus and the leader of the Titans against Zeus. He was defeated and condemned to the eternal labour of bearing the heaven on his head and hands.¹ He was also gifted with especial knowledge, for, according to Homer, he knew all the depths of the ocean. The myth of Tituos is of a similar kind. Instigated by Hêrê he made an attack on Artemis or Leto (wife of Zeus), for which the indignant sovereign of gods and

¹ Assuming that some of these anti-celestial, skeptical or knowledge myths may have had a metaphysical origin, the task of Atlas and the difficulty he found in discharging it may be compared with the remarkable words of Ecclesiastes, iii., 11; or with poetic utterances, such as Wordsworth's:—

“The heavy and the weary weight
Of all this unintelligible world”.

men punished him by first killing him with his thunderbolt ("lightning-blasted in his strength," Aeschylus calls it) and then casting him into Tartaros, where his gigantic frame covered no less than nine acres of ground. Here, too, his body (for being immortal he could not die) was for ever mangled by two vultures or snakes which continually devoured it. Taphoeus or Tuphon is the name of another monster of the same species, whose wisdom is crudely symbolised by his possession of a hundred heads. He wished to acquire, we are told, the sovereignty over gods and men, but was subdued after a fearful struggle by the thunderbolt of Zeus. Another version of the myth represents him contending with all the immortals. However, he was defeated, and, as a punishment, was buried in Tartaros under Mount Etna. Menoitios is the name of another Titan who for similar insurrection against the Olympian divinities was slain by Zeus, and was doomed to expiate his crime in Tartaros. Of a slightly different kind are the myths of Tantalos and Sisuphos. The former is said to have been the son of Zeus, and was King of Lydia, or Argos or Corinth, according to different versions of the story. He divulged the secrets which Zeus his father had imparted to him. For this he was punished by being placed in a lake, but so as to render it impossible to drink when he was thirsty—the water always receding when he stooped forward to quench his thirst. Branches laden with fruit also hung over his head, but when he stretched out his hands to clutch them they withdrew—all the while a huge stone being suspended above him, for ever threatening to crush him. Sisuphos, whose name is said to be a mocking reduplication of Sophos, was another subtle king who betrayed the designs of the gods. His punishment consisted in perpetually rolling up a hill a huge block of marble, which as perpetually rolled down again. The myth of Phaethon, though different in some points from those mentioned, yet possesses a few striking resemblances. He was the son of Helios, who attempted ambitiously to drive the chariot of his father, but proving unequal to the task was slain by Zeus. Now, without laying undue stress on these legends, or magnifying their mutual affinities, we cannot but be struck with their general resemblance to each other, and especially in those particulars in which they share the outlines of the Prometheus myth. All are legends of semi-divine

beings, who undertake some enterprise against the gods, either by way of asserting their own independence of thought and volition, or in order to benefit humanity; most of them sharing directly the imputation of a forbidden communication of celestial gifts to terrestrial beings. All assume that the sovereignty of the gods may possibly be tyrannical and unjust, and hence may justify insurrection; all tacitly appeal therefore to inherent justice, right, goodness, as entities prior in worth and existence even to the gods. All are, however, defeated by superior prowess. All, excepting Phaethon, are punished by some form of persistently agonising endurance—a constantly overcome but ever recurring evil. Lastly, most of them cherish, notwithstanding their subjugation by superior power, an indomitable audacity and defiance of that power. Like Milton's Satan they proudly boast

A mind not to be changed by place or time.¹

Though confined by Zeus in the "vasty deeps" of Tartaros, they find reason for exultation in their fall. Their language in Miltonic phrase is:—

Here at least
We shall be free; the Almighty hath not built
Here for his envy, will not drive us hence:
Here we may reign secure, and in my choice
To reign is worth ambition though in hell.
Better to reign in hell than serve in heaven.

Nor are these Titanomachies confined to Hellenic mythology. In every main branch of the Indo-Germanic and Semitic races we meet with myths of a similar kind. Among the Hebrews,

¹ Both the resemblances and contrasts between the Prometheus of Aeschylus and the Satan of Milton have been thus happily set forth by Miss Barrett in her translation of the former drama: "The Satan of Milton and the Prometheus of Aeschylus stand upon ground as unequal as do the sublime of sin and the sublime of virtue. Satan suffered from his ambition, Prometheus from his humanity: Satan for himself; Prometheus for mankind: Satan dared peril which he had not weighed; Prometheus devoted himself to sorrows which he had foreknown. 'Better to rule in hell,' said Satan; 'better to serve this rock,' said Prometheus. But in his hell Satan yearned to associate with man, while Prometheus preferred a solitary agony; nay, he even permitted his zeal and tenderness for the peace of others to abstract him from that agony's intenseness." See on the same point Welcker, *Griech. Götterlehre*, ii., 277, and compare Prof. Blackie in *Classical Museum*, vi., p. 8.

for example, we have the rebellion of the proud archangel, who

with ambitious aim
Against the throne and monarchy of God
Raised impious war in heaven,

together with the cognate myth of the "sons of God" and their gigantic issue, whose opposition to the Supreme Being and depravation of humanity brought about the Noachian deluge. This myth we shall meet again in the Book of Job. In the dualism of Zoroastrianism, the anti-celestial combats of the Devas in the Rig-Veda, the similar warfare of the Giants of the Scandinavian Edda, we have myths of a like kind,¹ all of them being probably descendants of rudimentary ideas of the primitive Aryans. What these root-thoughts of celestial commotions were it is not always easy to affirm positively. As a matter of high probability and in harmony with the conclusions of recent comparative mythologists, we may assume that all primitive myths have their origin in the action of childish mythopœic fancy as to natural phenomena. But this assumption by no means implies a consensus of opinion among mythologists as to the origin of the Prometheus and Titanic myths. Thus some writers affirm that Prometheus did not at first signify the lightning or celestial fire as in later forms of the myth, but rather the mist and the clouds. This is shown by his parentage. He is the son of Iapetos (air) and Klumene (water). His name is derived or derivable from roots which signify to mount upwards like the mist,² whence we have his character:—

The eagle-winged pride
Of sky-aspiring and ambitious thoughts.

His brothers—the sons of Iapetos—all seem to be related to aerial phenomena. And as regards the minuter elaboration of the myth, the resting of mists on the mountain sides, their daily dispersion by the wind, and their complete dissipation by the sun of the spring time, are uncouthly symbolised by the eagle's daily meal on the mangled liver of Prometheus Bound, the growth of the liver during every night and the final deliverance of the Titan by Herakles (the sun). No doubt the conception of a commotion or disturbance among celestial beings—the root-

¹ Compare Petersen, *loc. cit.*, p. 123.

² Petersen, *loc. cit.*, p. 84.

thought of the Titanomachy—is explicable on this theory of the aqueous origin of the Prometheus myth; for mists, clouds especially of portentous form and blackness, violent rain accompanied by hurricanes of wind, might easily suggest to men in primitive ages a warfare among higher powers. But I confess I myself incline to the older hypothesis which connects Prometheus with the various phenomena generated by light, fire, the sun, the stars, etc. Thus he is closely related to the eldest of the three dynasties of Greek Olympian mythology. Through Iapetos he is descended from Ouranos, the starry heavens, and belongs to that early prehistoric period when Sabeism or star-worship was a widely extended if not prevailing cult among the primitive Aryans. In conjunction with his brother Titans Prometheus seems to me a diversiform mythopœic rendering into the language of a crude childish fancy of such celestial phenomena as comets, aerolites or shootings stars, lightning flashes, thunderbolts and star showers, as well as terrene manifestations of a similar kind, such as volcanic eruptions. With these, too, must be included such probable origins of terrestrial fire as the kindling of a tree by a lightning flash, or the primitive method of producing fire by rubbing together two pieces of dry wood, etc. On this hypothesis we can easily understand the celestial commotions which gave birth to the Titanomachies of early races and religions. Among the Chaldeans or the primitive Aryan star-worshippers, for example, what ideas would be evoked by a thunderstorm, or a solar or lunar eclipse, as readily as a terrific quarrel among celestial potentates; or witnessing lightning flashes, thunderbolts or aerolites falling with a loud explosion from the sky, what notion would be so spontaneously generated as the defeat and downward propulsion of some rebellious spirit who had lifted himself up against the powers of heaven? while the still more striking phenomenon of star showers or the simultaneous fall of many aerolites would infallibly suggest as a picturesque idealisation of mythopœic fancy the overthrow and hurling into Tartaros of a numerous cohort of such rebellious spirits. Or, once more, the prevailing Greek fancy, which allocated to the defeated Titans and other insurrectionary spirits a place under volcanic mountains, as well as their perpetual defiance of the powers which placed them there, would be the

natural efflorescence of childish fancy evoked by a volcanic eruption with its usual accompaniments.

But although the Prometheus in common with other Titanic myths had at first only a physical or astronomical significance, I am far from thinking that this was their sole creative cause. I believe that the Titanomachies, like most of the chief Hellenic myths, had what may be termed moral, social, or metaphysical promptings as well. Indeed there is in my opinion a one-sided tendency in the present day to eliminate the metaphysical factor from ancient myths, which operates with especial unfairness on the mythologies of such introspective races as the Hindus and Hellenes. Because this and similar non-physical elements were exaggerated by myth interpreters of bygone times, we are not thereby warranted in totally ignoring them. Probably the oldest myths of all Indo-Germanic races are permeated by ideas other than those suggested by physical phenomena—ideas and generalisations that owe their birth to observation of man as a social being, to a keen insight into the working of the human reason and the human conscience in a stage of comparative culture. The power of introspection and abstraction pertaining to the original Aryan peoples is abundantly attested by the construction of the Sanscrit and the languages descended from it. An analysis of grammatical forms and word derivations, either of the Sanscrit, or of the Greek at its earliest emergence in history, reveals a profundity of metaphysical penetration, an elaboration of notional or ideal love, that must have been the product of some centuries of introspective exercise and evolution. We might therefore anticipate that the earliest myths current, those for example among the Greeks, would have interwoven into them metaphysical notions, ethical ideas, generalisations from human history, etc. Not that this stage was the earliest in human thought-evolution. Natural phenomena constituted undoubtedly the first raw material on which the mythopœic fancy of primitive races exercised itself; but the metaphysical stage succeeded long before the mythopœic faculty had exhausted itself and subjective ideas and impressions ceased to embody themselves in a fanciful objective form. We have an illustration of the three chief stages in mythological development in the oldest Olympian dynasties of Greek mythology.

The first or physical stage is marked by the period when Ouranos and Ge—the starry heavens and the fertile earth—were conceived as the ruling divinities of Olympus. In this stage all the powers of Nature were represented from a purely physical or sensible point of view. But this was succeeded by a metaphysical stage, in which the human faculties were equal to the formation and combination of abstractions, when, for example, Time (Chronos) was regarded not only as a distinct entity, but as the supreme producer of all things, and when his queen, Rhea, was similarly excogitated from the successional aspects, which even now form all that we know of time. Without sharing the opinion of Sokrates that those who constructed from their experience such an abstraction as Rhea must have had some idea of the flux of Herakleitos, we must allow that the effort involved no inconsiderable amount of metaphysical proficiency: and yet this was clearly allied with the exercise of the mythopœic faculty. The next stage may be termed anthropomorphic, in which the ruling powers of Nature, albeit their physical characteristics are not overlooked, are more and more invested with the attributes seen to pertain to man, and when Chronos is succeeded by Zeus, and the Olympian Court assumes the likeness of a disorderly human family. These stages of myth-evolution need not here be investigated further. To return to the object for which they were adduced, we probably have in the Prometheus myth, as in most others, metaphysical and moral as well as physical causes. Thus, if the commotions and mutual animosities of heavenly powers embodied in the Titanomachies were first suggested by physical phenomena such as thunderstorms, star showers, etc., this rudimentary conception was in all likelihood confirmed and matured by observation of the conduct of men in societies and social communities. The dissidence among celestial potentates first inferred from Nature was attested by experience of the mutual collision of human wills, dispositions and inclinations. It seemed impossible for reflective men, even in primitive times, to conceive a number of beings like the Olympian deities, each endued with intelligence, power and volition to an extreme degree, without a gradual inference of antagonism and perhaps final separation. This is one root-thought of the polytheism which is the primary form of all the known religions of the

world, and from which, as John Stuart Mill pointed out, the common forms of Christianity are by no means exempt. Whether the primitive Aryans, who first excogitated the rudimentary ideas from which celestial strife in all its varied forms has been evolved, based their moral presumption of such a theory on observation of the enmities, wars, etc., among earthly potentates it is impossible to say; but it is easy to see that they could have had no difficulty in assimilating natural phenomena of a striking kind to the ordinary manifestations of human volition. For at that time, we must remember, every natural appearance was regarded from a personal and anthropomorphic standpoint. The thunderstorm, the rain shower, were not then considered the inevitable results of law, still less as the purposeless effects of chance or accident. They were instinct with will, conscious effort, deliberate intention. There was little difference in this respect between the supreme rule of a physical dynasty like that of Ouranos, and a metaphysical or immaterial one like that of Chronos. Each of those universal sovereigns was invested with volition and purposeful energies, just as much as were the actions of a primitive Aryan chief or king, and there was no conscious distinction between the volitional manifestations of the heavenly, and those of the earthly, potentate. Hence, when the early Aryans, with their prepossession that all the heavenly bodies were deities endowed with power and volition, saw the wondrous phenomenon of a star shower, no idea could have seemed so natural and reasonable as that they were witnessing the termination of some heavenly battle, an internecine strife of angels, giants, or Titans, in which the dissentient wills and powers of the star gods were arrayed against each other, and the hurling of the defeated rebels into Tartaros. An early Aryan poet might have imagined the stationary stars driving their insurrectionary and fugitive brethren before them, just as in Flaxman's or Doré's illustrations of *Paradise Lost* the celestial archangels are driving Satan and his hellish legions out of heaven at the point of the sword.

3. But while we affirm with moral certitude that the Prometheus myth had a two-fold origin, one physical and natural, the other metaphysical and symbolical, these two sources by no means exhaust all the different embodiments and interpreta-

tions the myth has received in ancient or modern times. Or putting the matter in another form, these sources are divisible into a number of subordinate classes. Thus we have the six following expositions of the myths :—

1. Aqueous, in which Prometheus represents the clouds or mist.
2. Fiery Celestial, in which he represents the stars, lightning, eclipses, etc.
3. Fiery Terrestrial, in which he embodies either the destructive aspects of fire, as for example in volcanoes, or its useful and enlightening phases.
4. Medical or Scientific.
5. Historical.
6. Rational, Moral, and Metaphysical.

I. The primary germ of the Prometheus myth—its rudimentary conception divested of all accretion—is strife among rival powers, the initiatory idea in all probability not including the beneficence or maleficence of those powers in relation to man, though their human aspect soon emerges in the history of early myths. Now the mere statement of such a myth-germ proves its capacity for assuming a considerable diversity of forms. Strife, rivalry, and dissonance, or phenomena that lend themselves to such an interpretation, are observable in many aspects of Nature, not only among its violent commotions, but among its more peaceful and ordinary phases. To the mythopœic fancy there is a rivalry and perpetual conflict between cloud-forms and the breezes that scatter or for a time annihilate them. A still more marked antagonism seems revealed by the thunder-bolt or lightning flash that cleaves the forest tree, rives asunder gigantic rocks, or sets human habitations on fire. A rivalry of another kind is that which exists between opposing principles or elements in Nature, for example, between heat and cold, between fire and water, etc. The harshness of natural dissonance assumes however a more violent form when man and his interests are regarded as a primary if not exclusive concernment of Nature, and when every agency that affects prejudicially his welfare is considered as a personal foe. Nor is this all; for turning from Nature to humanity we find strife and rivalry the normal products of men in every stage of social life—the collision of

divergent and opposing volitions being a necessary factor in all human progress.¹ Strife is lastly the undeniable condition of the individual man regarded as a reasoning being, when once he has attained a stage of retrospection and introspection. We thus see how natural, nay, how inevitable, it was that the germ of the Prometheus should assume under varied conditions of development the manifold forms contained in the foregoing classification, and we are also able to appreciate the truth—too often overlooked by mythologists—that the same myth, originating among different races and at different times, may possess diverse sources and designations while sharing the same general outline of formal conception, as the Aeschylean Prometheus significantly says of his mother πολλῶν ὀνομάτων μορφὴν μία, “one form with many names”.

I. *Prometheus the Mist or Cloud.*

Although the preponderating and general source of the Prometheus myth in all its forms seems to connect it with fire, light, etc., yet in fairness we must allow that there are some arguments for its alleged affinity with mist and cloud phenomena. First it represents the more ordinary phenomena of Nature upon which rather than upon its rarer, more striking aspects the earliest mythopœic fancy seems in the first instance to have exercised itself. Secondly, it is capable of being supported by the derivation of the name Prometheus, while in other languages, Semitic and Indo-Germanic, we find an analogous affinity between clouds and mists and the names and titles of great personages. Thirdly, it possesses certain acknowledged Titanic attributes; for mists and clouds are earth-born, gigantic, unshapely, terror-causing,² while mists climbing the mountain side might well

¹ The classical scholar need hardly be reminded of the function of the beneficent or progressive Ἔρις in the works of Hesiod. Compare, for example, *Opera et Dies*, i., 24; ἀγαθὴ δ' Ἔρις ἦδε βροτοῖσι.

² The personification and mythification of cloud and mist-shapes is a large subject which cannot be here discussed. We may however observe, as bearing on this interpretation of the Prometheus myth: 1. The facility with which the forms of clouds lend themselves to mythopœic fancy. 2. The rivalry of cloud-myth personages to celestial beings. 3. The gift of *foresight*, frequently attributed to them, as for example in the case of the Cymric *Cygeraeth* or hag of the mist, the Irish Banshee,

claim the character of aspiring, ambitious, heaven-storming, etc. Fourthly, for the last reason it must be credited with a considerable share of mythopœic suggestiveness, for we can readily imagine how the ascent of a mist as it were from earth to heaven and its development into a firm overhanging pall of clouds might be fancy-shaped into the bold effort of an earth-born monster to assault the citadel of heaven, and extinguish the light of the sun or of the moon and stars. More than one ancient myth is based on this phenomenon; indeed, we are assured by comparative mythologists that it is a frequently occurring form of myth-making lore. A remarkable illustration of the mode of evolution pertaining to this myth is afforded us by Elihu's speech in the Book of Job (xxxvi, 26): as describing the feelings evoked among early races by the observation of mists and clouds "rising to thunder"—as West of England people phrase it—it seems deserving of quotation:—

Behold, God is so great that he is not known,
 The number of his years cannot be counted;
 For he draweth up the water-drops
 Which pour themselves in rain as his mist.
 Wherefore the light clouds spread themselves;
 They descend in drops on many people.
 Can any understand the spreadings of the clouds
 Or the noise of his pavilion?
 Behold he spreadeth his light upon it
 And covereth the roots of the sea.
 For by these he judgeth the people
 And giveth them food in abundance.
 His hands he clotheth with lightning,
 And sendeth it against his foes.
 His thunder announceth him,
 So do the kine his mounting upward.
 Ay, at this my heart trembles,
 And leaps up from its place.

etc. On the general subject a writer in *Notes and Queries* (ser. i., vol. i., p. 295) well remarks: "Any one who has witnessed the gathering and downward rolling of a genuine mountain fog must fully appreciate the spirit in which men first peopled the cloud with such supernatural beings as those above described; or with those which dimly yet constantly pervade the much-admired *Legend of Montrose*". Of course the ascending mist would be more symbolical of a Titanic personage contending against the gods than that which rolls down the mountain.

Hear, hear ye the noise of his voice,
The roar that proceedeth from his mouth.
He disperses it under the whole heaven,
And his lightning to the bounds of the earth.

In this passage we have the consecutive appearances of mist and cloud formation narrated in a manner equally graphic and poetical. The first stage is the condensation of atmospheric moisture in filmy drops. Then follows their aggregation in light vapoury clouds. Rising from the ground and gradually increasing in size, they appear to take the form of a gigantic monster animated with life and motion. This apparition, now mythicised into an earth-born giant, begins slowly to creep up the mountain side. Its progress upwards is watched with alarm by the cattle, for they presage a thunderstorm.¹ Upward ascends the mist-Titan still increasing in immensity and power. Presently he spreads himself like an immense sail or carpet over the sky, covering the whole expanse of heaven, quenching the light of the sun, and hiding the roots of the cloud-sea—the water above the firmament—as the poet, with a bold metaphor, terms the long shafts of light streaming downwards between two clouds. And now begins the contest between the giant and the celestial powers. The deity prepares for the fight. His coming is announced, while the mist-giant is creeping up the mountain side, by the faint rumbling of distant thunder. He arms himself with the lightning which he hurls against his foe. The noise of the battle is heard throughout the world, and the lightning flashes are seen from one side of heaven to the other. For a time the fight seems to wage with varying fortune ; but at last victory declares itself on the side of the celestials, and the cloud-giants are dispersed. The storm is over, and once more the sun shines forth in all its brilliancy. Occasionally the struggle here depicted assumes a somewhat different form. It is a contest between cloud-forms and winds, the latter being regarded in this case as the emissaries of the celestials, and employed by them to perform the same militant service as the thunder and

¹ Compare Virgil, *Georgics*, i., 374-6 :—

“ . . . illum surgentem vallibus imis
Aëriæ fugere grues, aut bucula cælum
Suspiciens patulis captavit naribus auras ”.

the lightning flash. This plan of the myth is also alluded to in the same portion of the Book of Job:—

When men see not the sun,
Because its light is hidden behind the clouds,
Then passeth the wind, and the sky is pure ;
From the North comes the gold ray of light
To reveal the glory of God.

But there is another aspect of this interpretation of the Prometheus myth deserving notice. In most Hellenic versions of the myth the Titan is represented as conveying the sacred celestial fire for the behoof of mortals in the hollow of a fennel rod. Now it is remarkable that the Greeks called the long pillars of light which are occasionally seen shooting downwards between two clouds by the name of staves (*ράβδοι*), just as they are now called in some parts of England "sun-posts". Their purpose according to the folk-lore of most European countries is to draw or suck up water, and they are accounted an infallible prognostic of rain. With this function agrees our derivation of the name Prometheus, which some writers trace to the roots *μη*, *μηθ*, *μητ*, related to the Greek *μάω*, and which imply movement in an upward direction. On this theory the descending light-shafts would symbolise at one and the same time the descent of Prometheus with the stolen light and the ascent of the ambitious Titan to take by storm the abode of the celestial deities. It is clear that this modification of clouds and mist by the rays of the sun struck forcibly early observers of meteorological phenomena, while not less remarkable is the general concurrence of opinion as to the function of these pillars of light. In Germany and England at the present day, as I have just stated, they are said to draw water, and we have the same idea in ancient times. The Scandinavian Edda, for example, represents the god Loki (light: a deity whose affinity to the Hellenic Prometheus, as we shall see farther on, is very marked) as drinking water in this way;¹ and the Hebrew poet in Elihu's speech above quoted seems to allude to the same function.

¹ Grimm, *Deutsche Mythologie*, i., p. 221.

II. *Prometheus conceived as Fire (celestial).*

I have already alluded to the stars and other heavenly bodies as presenting phenomena which, subjected to the vivid fancy and plastic energy of myth-makers, would readily take the form of a myth resembling that of Prometheus. Indeed the connection of Prometheus with fire or some of its properties is a feature so distinctly impressed on all the older and more widely diffused forms of the myth that we must, I think, accept it as the factor in its original formation. Sabeism or star worship was, we are aware, a prevailing form of religion among the Semitic and Indo-Germanic races of prehistoric times. Abundant traces of it exist in the Old Testament as well as in the early records of most branches of the Aryan race. Now the first impressions that would naturally be produced on early star-gazers by a contemplation of the heavens would be: 1. A conviction that the stars, like the clouds, etc., were living beings. 2. That they were related to each other as superior and inferior in a kind of celestial hierarchy, beginning with the sun and moon and descending to the smallest visible star.¹ When the imaginations of these early astronomers had become still further matured, and when the conditions of social life were sufficiently advanced to suggest the symbolism, nothing could be more natural than to take the two great luminaries as celestial representatives of an earthly king and queen; or, in the agricultural stage of society, of the Patriarch or tribal chief and his wife. The principal stars, estimating them in the order of size or light-giving powers, would be the heavenly types of those persons who on account of kin or for other reasons stood next in order to the king or chief. This conception of the starry heavens as a kind of celestial Olympus probably preceded the cognate but subsequent idea of the stars being the spirits or habitations of mighty heroes or potentates, who were awarded a place among the constellations for services rendered to the gods. At any rate the connection of the stars with princes, chiefs, giants, etc., is very distinctly marked in the mythologies both of Semitic

¹ The general order of priority among star-worshippers seems to have been: 1. The moon. 2. The stars, and especially the planets. 3. The sun. Compare Schultze's *Fetischismus*, p. 237.

and Aryan races. When this stage of star personification was once reached, nothing would be easier than the imaginary evolution of such a myth as that of Prometheus.

Turning however to the more particular sources of that myth, we find Prometheus in its very earliest stage of formation connected with the planet Venus. He is the morning star, the dawn bringer (ἑωσ-φόρος) or the light bearer (φωσ-φόρος)—the latter term in a cognate form (ὁ πυρφόρος) being the common Hellenic designation of the Titan and his mission. Epimetheus his twin brother is the same planet seen as the evening star (their actual identity being not at first recognised). It would seem that in primitive times when Sabeism was a widely prevalent form of cult among the common ancestors both of Semites and Aryans, the morning and evening stars stood highest among all stellar phenomena, as those which impressed themselves most forcibly upon men's attention.¹ Nor is this surprising. Few celestial appearances are more striking than the majestic rising of Venus from the earth, or, as the Greeks would mostly witness it, from the sea, during the pre-solar half of her orbit; preceding by an hour or two the great luminary of day, and heralding the "rosy-fingered" or "crocus-mantled" dawn. This is the phenomenon described by Homer:—

εὖτ' ἠοσφόρος εἶσι φώς ἐρέων ἐπὶ γαῖαν
ὄντε μετὰ κροκόπεπλος ὑπεῖρ ἅλα κίδναται Ἥως.²

And the same subject has exercised the imaginations and pencils of poets from his time to ours. But hardly less striking is the appearance of Venus soon after sunset in the post-solar half of her orbit. It was impossible even in the earliest ages to avoid connecting these phenomena and assimilating the morning and evening stars as at least correlated and co-equal orbs; the peculiarity of appearance shared by both (the white shimmering light of Venus serving to differentiate her completely from all the other planets), their mode of rising, the altitude they attained, and their close relation to the sun, were common characteristics

¹ Schultze, *Fetischismus*, p. 237. Compare Hesiod, *Theogony*, p. 381:—

“τοὺς δὲ μέτ' ἀστέρα τίκτεν Ἑωσφόρον Ἥριγένεια
ἄστρο τε λαμπετόωντα, τὰτ' οὐρανὸς ἐστεφάνωται”.

Iliad, xxiii., line 226.

that would soon have impressed themselves on early observers.¹ Hence we have them described by the Hellenes as twin and intimate brothers, while in the Scandinavian Edda they figure as the two eyes of the giant Thiapi which Odin places in the heavens as stars.² But their identity as the same star in different positions was a discovery made at a very early period. Whewell indeed says that "he can hardly conceive men noticing the stars for a year or two without coming to this conclusion".³ The discovery is attributed by Apollodoros to Pythagoras,⁴ who probably derived it with other stellar lore from Oriental sources—it was certainly made at a very early date.

But before this discovery, when Phosphoros and Hesperos were as yet regarded as two stars or stellarised persons—for the animated or personified idea of heavenly bodies must never be left out of consideration when discussing mythological astronomy—we have the development of that beautiful symbolism which forms the outline of the myth as it afterwards became popularised in Greece through the works of Hesiod and Aeschylus. To the early night-watchers who first directed their gaze to Phosphoros, the most remarkable features in its rising were its own brilliancy and the consequent suppression of other stars in the eastern part of the sky, excepting those that were of the first magnitude. This phenomenon, interpreted by the lively imagination of Orientals, would not unnaturally assume the form of a Titanic attempt to take possession of the heavens, *i.e.*, the celestial vault or expanse which is signified by the word Zeus. That the attempt was frustrated was seen when the dawn increased and Phosphoros with his giant brethren⁵

began to pale their ineffectual fire,

¹ Thus Cicero speaks of "Stella Veneris quæ Lucifer dicitur cum antegreditur Solem, cum subsequitur autem Hesperus".—*De Nat. Deor.*, lib. ii. Compare also Donne, *Of the Progress of the Soul* :—

"Venus retards her not, to enquire how shee
Can—being one star—Hesper and Vesper bee".

—*Poems*, ed. Grosart, vol. i., p. 138.

² Grimm, *D. M.*, 686.

³ *History of Inductive Sci.*, i., 109.

⁴ Περὶ θεῶν, Book ii. But Phavorinus ascribes the discovery to Parmenides. Most modern astronomers, however, prefer Pythagoras. Compare Whewell, *op. cit.*, p. 109; Flammarion, *Les Terres du Ciel*, p. 175.

⁵ Compare Job, xxxviii., 7, "When the morning stars sang together

and were soon entirely extinguished. In the Sanscrit, one name for Venus, *Daitya Guru*, is said to mean the Queen of the Titans, while in the Hebrew mythology Lucifer is a Latinised form of the name for the chief of the insurrectionary angels. A cognate and still more remarkable idea is that of the ancient Mexicans, who held Venus to be superior to the Sun.¹

More significant still was the moral symbolism that in process of time came to be attached to Prometheus and Epimetheus as the impersonations of the morning and evening stars. The former was the bright harbinger or herald of the day. He is therefore the emblematical representation of forethought, foresight, anticipation and hope. He symbolises providence, prudence, insight, and therefore skill, energy and progress. He directs men's gaze to the future of light and joyousness, and bids them turn their back on the dark, irretrievable past. On the other hand Epimetheus, the evening star, possesses with opposite position a corresponding symbolical meaning. The sun has departed, taking with him that light which was the physical and mental sustenance of the thoughtful Greek. The darkness of night is approaching. Hesperos recalls the light that has disappeared. Its outlook is directed, not to the dark vista of the future, but to the brightness of the past. It is hence the star of afterthought, of reflection, of memory, of retrospection, and, by a connection of thought easily traceable, of irresolution, hopelessness and despair. In short, Prometheus brings light with its attendant blessings to mortals, and especially—for this is the consummation of his gifts—he bestows upon them hope. In his own words:—

θνητούς γ' ἔπαυσα μὴ προδέρκεσθαι μόρον.

τύφλᾱς ἐν αὐτοῖς ἐλπιδᾶς κατῴκισα.²

Man's doom from mortal foresight I kept hid,
I caused to dwell within them sightless hopes.

and all the Sons of God shouted for joy;" and Virgil's "Titaniaque astra," *Æneid*, vi., 725. The same idea also occurs in Isaiah, xiii., 10, where the word גִּבּוֹרִים, the plural of the name rendered in our version Orion, signifies "gigantes coeli," i.e., *majora coeli sidera*. See Gesenius, *ad. voc.*

¹ Compare Schultze, *Fetischismus*, p. 249.

² Aeschylus, *Prom.*, 256, 258. The contradiction implied in these lines, both to the express function of Prometheus as the bestower of

Epimetheus on the contrary introduces darkness and error, and while in conjunction with Pandora he is the means of bringing many ills on mortals, he adds to these ill offices this greatest evil of all, that he or rather Pandora prevents hope from blessing humanity.

μῦνη δ' αὐτόθι Ἑλπίς ἐν ἀρρήκτοισι δόμοισιν
ἔνδον ἔμιμνε πίθου ὑπὸ χεῖλεσιν, οὐδὲ θύραζε
ἐξέπητ'.¹

We hence see how Phosphoros and Hesperos became typical to prehistoric races of foresight and aftersight, of hopefulness and hopelessness. Nor is this symbolism of morning and evening phenomena an isolated or uncommon feature of mythology; for we find kindred ideas in the myth traditions of most ancient races. Thus, to take another instance, in German mythology² the reason given for the redness of the dawn is that it denotes its uncertainty as to whether it will accomplish its daily course and the full evolution of light—where the prospective, hopeful nature of Prometheus emerges very distinctly; the redness of evening twilight being accounted for by its standing over hell, *i.e.*, the abode of darkness, where again the fearful, helpless nature of Epimetheus seems clearly indicated. With these main outlines of stellar symbolism—so far as regards our subject of Prometheus—kept in view, we cannot have much difficulty in filling them up. Pandora, the Zeus-given wife of Epimetheus, with her jar of ills, may perhaps be taken in one sense to represent the night

foresight on humanity and to the blind condition of men prior to his beneficent agency, has been often remarked; but it may be doubted whether it is so great as is supposed. At least it is conceivable that the foresight he extinguished was the dread anticipation, the animal terror, of death, which would be a result of a low stage of civilisation; while the “sightless hopes” he substituted for these alarms may be taken as the far outlook into the hidden future, which is frequently an accompaniment of high imaginative culture. The idea of immortality, regarding it only as a product of advanced culture, may be taken as an illustration of the *τυφλὰς ἐλπίδας* with which Prometheus says he inspired mankind. In a different region of thought the blindness of hope may be compared with the well-known definition of Faith in the Epistle to the Hebrews.

¹ Hesiod, *Op. et Dies*, 96-98.

² Grimm, *D. M.*, p. 684.

and darkness¹—the source to Oriental imagination of all kinds of diseases, the time when maleficent and baleful influences of all sorts were most potent. Indeed if the morning dawn and its promise of day be regarded as the greatest of blessings, the evening twilight with its star must of necessity be considered as boding evil; and if Prometheus gives men light and thereby progress, against the will of Zeus, the most obvious vengeance the ruler of Olympus could employ would be to send them darkness with its attendant privations and (supposed) positive ills.²

But there still remains one point in the symbolism to be explained. Prometheus is of all the gods the greatest sympathiser with and benefactor to humanity. He conveys the light of heaven to benighted mortals. This is partly to be explained by his position as harbinger of daylight, but may also be a myth suggested by the low altitude of Venus both as morning and as evening star. Her position so close to the horizon would not unnaturally induce the idea of more than ordinary affection for the earth and its inhabitants, and when actually verging on the horizon she would have borne the semblance of a fallen star, and might have been saluted as

Bright star of Venus fall'n down on the earth.

Possibly, too, there might have operated the additional suggestion derived—as so many other myths have arisen—from a misconstruction of one of its titles. The name *φωσφόρος*, “light-bringer,” might conceivably have been interpreted as if it meant “man-bringer” or “man-creator,” though the latter signification is also attributable to many other forms of the myth which will meet us farther on. In any case, it appears that Prometheus—in the most widely accepted form of the myth—was connected with Phosphoros or the morning star, and from that symbolism

¹ In a more metaphysical sense the junction of Epimetheus and Pandora may be taken to symbolise the irrecoverable nature of past time and the hopelessness, together with other more positive ills, pertaining to unavailable retrospection.

² Compare Job's curse of the night of his conception, chap. iii., 9:—

“Dark be the stars of its twilight,
Let it hope for the light—but in vain,
Let it not see the eyelids of the dawn”.

has derived most of its various meanings, both in ancient and modern times. Perhaps the most obvious of these different meanings was originated by the transition from physical to mental light. In the religious books of the Sabæans the planet Venus is called by the several names "Flame," "Heat," "Spirit," and in the last designation the meaning seems to pass into mind or intellect. And we have a precisely similar transition in some forms of the Hellenic myth, as well as in the attributes of Loki in the Scandinavian Edda.

But the starry origin of Prometheus assumes a peculiar aspect in Semitic theology, and receives many widely extended implications, some of which have penetrated into the religious beliefs of Christendom. The conception of stars as divine beings—"the hosts of heaven"—appears to have assumed among the Semites a peculiarly intense form. Thus at an early epoch in Jewish history the stars seem to have been regarded partly as astral bodies placed in the firmament for the physical enlightenment of mankind, partly as animated spirits or angels. It is in connection with this mixed idea that we have the tradition of the fallen angels—a fragment of angelology probably suggested in the first instance, as I have above remarked, by the phenomenon of falling stars. This supposition is rendered well-nigh certain by a comparison of the Book of Job with the early chapters of Genesis and with the Book of Enoch. We derive thence, and especially from the last-named work, a complete narrative of what might be termed the Semitic Titanomachy, which I have already incidentally touched upon. The similarities between this and the Greek myth of Prometheus are so many and striking that Welcker supposed the Semitic writers must have known the Hellenic legends of Prometheus and Pandora.¹ But it is quite conceivable that both are offshoots of a common and far more ancient myth. According to the Hebrew story the sons of God, or the starry "heaven watchers," "saw the daughters of men that they were fair, and they took them wives of all that they chose". The issue of this unhallowed connection was a brood of giants, who corrupted mankind and set themselves in opposition to heaven. These celestial watchers—chiefest of whom was

¹ Welcker, *Aesch. Tril.*, p. 81.

Azazael—introduced among men many arts and sciences which served to degrade mankind. Thus we are told that “Azazael taught men how to make swords and knives and shields and armour, and he taught them to see what was to come after them (*i.e.*, the Future), he instructed them also in works of art, *viz.*, the making of bracelets and ornaments, the use of paint for the face, the beautifying of eyebrows, the costliest and most precious stones, and all colours and the metals of the earth. And there was great ungodliness and much whoredom: and they sinned and all their ways became corrupt.”¹ Others of these rebellious star-spirits taught mankind all kinds of divination, the art of compounding simples, medicines, charms, the knowledge of the stars, the signs of the zodiac, the courses of the moon, etc. These gifts, as we shall presently see, bear a remarkable resemblance to the boons which the Aeschylean Prometheus claims to have bestowed on mankind, though in the Hellenic myth they were regarded as sources of the progress not of the degradation of mankind. We find also in a later passage of the Book of Henoch that they are attributed to the agency of the leader of the rebellious angels: for the faithful angels are represented as complaining to God: “See then what Azazael has done, how he has taught all unrighteousness upon earth, and has revealed to the world the secrets of heaven”.² I need not point out that the latter half of this accusation against Azazael is precisely the complaint of the Olympian Zeus against Prometheus and other kindred spirits of the Hellenic mythology. The punishment assigned to the Semitic star-spirit is also that awarded to the Titan: for we are told, “moreover, the Lord spake to Rafael, Bind Azazael hands and feet and place him in the darkness: make an opening in the desert which is in Dudael and lay him therein, and lay rough and sharp rocks upon him and cover him with darkness”.³ In subsequent passages Henoch is made to witness the punishment of the stars which transgressed, and he sees the seven fallen and imprisoned stars like great burning mountains.⁴ Here, again, we may observe the resemblance of the Hebrew to the Hellenic

¹ Book of Henoch, ed. Dillmann, p. 3.

² *Ibid.*, chap. x., 4, p. 4.

³ *Ibid.*

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 11.

myth, for most of the defeated Titans were said to have been imprisoned by Zeus beneath volcanoes.

But there is one more stage in the history of this Hebrew Prometheus to be mentioned. I have already noticed that he is identified in later Hebrew mythology with Satan, the great adversary of Jahve. This is the position he holds in the Book of Job. As such, he appears to have been the object of a peculiar religious rite, which throws no small amount of reflected light on the religious ideas once current among the Jews. On the day of Atonement two goats were directed to be offered, one to Jahve, the other to Azazel, the latter being driven into the wilderness where Azazel was supposed to be confined. It is an interesting characteristic of the diverse idiosyncrasy of the Hebrew and Hellenic races at one stage of their common development that the traditional enlightener of humanity should have been regarded by those whom he presumably benefited from such divergent points of view—the Prometheus of the Greeks being esteemed as the benefactor and friend of man, while the Hebrew Azazel is hated and feared as his greatest enemy. We have, I need scarcely add, the same Semitic conception of the office and influence of Satan still more forcibly asserted in the third chapter of Genesis. Nor at its early development was the cognate notion of Deity being jealous of human progress by any means foreign to Greek religious thought, all the great teachers of humanity in their ancient mythology, *e.g.*, Orpheus, being represented as the victims of Divine Nemesis. Indeed, the "Prometheus Bound" of Aeschylus may be described as a protest of the Greek conscience and sense of justice against such a supposition, but the idea never acquired among the Hellenes the consistency and the gross Manichæan development which it found in Semitism.

Further aspects of the Promethean myth meet us in investigating the mythology of the ancient Aryans previous to their dispersion and migration. These however we have, not in a clear connected form, but in fragments which have been incorporated into the Veda and Zendavesta and in the literatures of which those sacred books form the *nuclei*; but that these fragmentary *disjuncta membra* once formed integral portions of a compact astronomical tradition is sufficiently proved by compara-

tive mythology. Indeed, this common participation of stellar and planetary lore extended itself far beyond the limits of the ancient Aryans, for we find the same rudimentary ideas among the ancient civilisations of South America, and among the aborigines of North America and Africa. Few questions in early human history are more puzzling than this similarity of stellar names and notions pertaining to races so widely separated and so diverse in origin and culture. A partial solution of it may be found, as Mr. Max Müller has indicated, in comparative etymology,¹ though this touches only the outskirts of the real difficulty, which is not so much similarity of name as of the ideas that educed in a manner so arbitrary and capricious a similar nomenclature.

I have already spoken of the superiority of the planet Venus to all the starry bodies that first arrested the attention and suggested the veneration of primitive star-gazers. But Venus may be said to have two aspects. She is a morning star and also a planet. In her former capacity her connection with the Prometheus myth is direct and immediate; in the latter it is indirect and partial. Hence the recognition of Venus as Phosphoros is by no means the same thing as her planetary discrimination. Indeed, the morning star, the harbinger of day, denotes a function sometimes shared by Jupiter and Mercury; and probably in the very earliest period of stellar observation there was a tendency to confound these planets with each other. Now, though Venus's position as Phosphoros is fully allowed in the old mythologies of India and Persia, she also enjoys especial distinction as a planet, the goddess of love, etc. I do not, however, think that we must discriminate too widely between the Promethean and purely planetary aspects of Venus.² In some forms of his myth Pro-

¹ Compare, e.g., *Science of Language*, ii., p. 361.

² The ideas of love, longing, yearning, which are the ground thoughts of Aphrodite and Eros on their metaphysical side, are evidently related to the foresight which is the characteristic of Prometheus. It is remarkable how the idea of love—the sensual passion in the first instance—has become transmuted in so many different directions into desire of the most holy and ineffable objects. Its personification is an inevitable outcome of the process, and is exemplified by the history of such terms as the German *Wunsch* (compare Grimm, *D. M.*, p. 126, and *passim*). There seems an immeasurable distance between the apprehension of such a natural phenomenon as that described by the poet—

metheus is himself the man-maker, the creator of the human race (as we shall presently see). There is thus some slight intermixture or connection of idea between Venus as the morning star and as the goddess of love. Indeed, the reasonableness of this is shown by the correlated notions of fire, heat, love, fertility, which are so often found combined in the myths and legends of ancient peoples, and which will again meet us in the course of our investigation.

Turning now to the earliest intimations afforded us in ancient Hindu literature of Venus and Prometheus (for the planet goddess and the morning star must for the present be kept together), we must admit that, as Lassen remarks, "the planets cannot be reckoned among the Vedic deities".¹ Nor, indeed, have we any reason to expect this; for, assuming the truth of the theory that the Veda represents the efforts of the Brahmans and the priestly caste to wean the early inhabitants of India from the combined star worship, fetichism and idolatry of their pre-migration period, its incidental allusions to and transmutations of star worship are precisely such as we might have expected. We may indeed note in passing that we find the same relation in every case between the astrolatry which pertained as an elementary phase of religious thought to all the great races of antiquity, and their sacred books; in other words, we find in them traces of Sabeism as an antiquated and partially disused religion—like an atrophied organ in an existing species telling of a different life and functions in the remote past. In this respect the Veda, the Zendavesta, the Bible,² and the Koran all

"The planet of love is on high,
Beginning to faint in the light that she loves,—
To faint in the light and to die"—

and the introspective analysis which resulted in the conception of Eros. Yet this distance had already been traversed by man at the birth not only of the Greek but even of the Sanscrit language. Very significant also is the relation in the Greek between Eros and different words of inquiry, as *ἔρομαι*, *ἐρωτάω*, denoting thus early the close relation of inquiry and persistent yearning which supplies us with an explanation of the frequent affinity found to exist between skepticism and mysticism.

¹ *Ind. Alterthumskunde*, vol. i., p. 989.

² That the older books of the Bible contain traces of astrolatry may now be said to be conceded by all competent critics. For obvious rea-

stand on a similar footing, all bear traces in different degrees of an earlier star and sun worship as existing among the primitive Aryans, the Hebrews, and the Arabs, and all are products of a time when a more spiritual and less fetichistic mode of thought began to prevail.

But although the planets as such are not Vedic deities, it is noteworthy that the only one mentioned in the Vedic hymns is Sukra,¹ *i.e.* Venus, who in other ancient Hindu writings is so allied with the Rishis—the Hindu representatives of the Titans—and with the earliest progenitors of humanity as to indicate a connection with the main outlines of the Prometheus myth. More conspicuous in the Veda are the indirect affinities of the chief Vedic deities with the Sabeism of which the Prometheus myth forms a part. Of the three chief Vedic gods two of them are clearly derived from the astrolatry of the pre-Vedic period. The first of these, Varuna, like the Greek *Ouranos*, represents primarily the starry sky—the supreme deity of Sabeism. In the Veda this deity is represented as undergoing the transmutation which seems to have befallen all purely Sabeian conceptions, in other words, the transmutation of night- into day-phenomena. Thus, from being the starry expanse Varuna becomes generally the expanse of heaven, the pathway and abode of the sun no less than of the moon and stars, while as a still later transition, probably on account of the worship addressed to the storm and rain gods, Varuna becomes the immensity of the ocean, whence the rain was supposed to originate. The other Vedic deity possessing a Promethean character is Agni, the god of fire, who is described as the first Rishi,² the first who taught men how to offer sacrifice to the gods, as a mediator between gods and men, as the peculiar friend of humanity, to whom he reveals the treasures of the gods. His splendour purifies men, for which reason he is styled Pāvaka, the purifier. He is also regarded as the ground-principle of all the other deities, who are only modifications of

sons it declined and disappeared with the growth of theocratic ideas. Thus the earlier naturalistic sentiment of the nineteenth Psalm—the Glory of God being based on the fact that there is no speech nor language, but their voices are heard among them—gives place to the same truth regarded as a plea for Jewish exclusiveness (compare Deut., iv., 19).

¹ Lassen, *Ind. Alt.*, vol. i., p. 903.

² *Ibid.*

himself, and as the source of the life diffused throughout the world.

Still more decisively Promethean are ancient Hindu legends respecting Manu and the Rishis. That the Rishis were originally stars admits of no doubt. When they are spoken of as the seven Rishis they refer to the seven stars of the constellation of the Great Bear.¹ Still, that the morning star planets were also included under the same designation is shown by the description of Jupiter and Venus as sons of the Vedic Rishi and brothers of the human Rishi (? giants); while elsewhere we are told that the regent of Venus is the son of the Vedic Rishi, and, as above remarked, one name for Venus in Sanscrit signifies the Queen of the Titans or Rishis. Putting these intimations together, it is evident that we have here a connected representation of all the great stars that preceded the dawn, just as we have in the Greek Phosphoros and his Titanic companions, and in the seven watchers of the Book of Enoch. At an early stage of Hindu and pre-Vedic thought they were classed together as Rishis,² and conceived as possessing similar functions.

Now, of these Rishis we find current in early Hindu tradition unmistakably Promethean ideas and associations. Sir George Cox in his *Aryan Mythology*³ thus summarises their properties: "These Rishis are the media or instruments through which the divine Veda was imparted to mankind. In its widest meaning the word was taken to denote the priestly bards who conducted the worship of the gods, but they are spoken of sometimes as the poets who compose the songs and present them to the deities whom they celebrate, and sometimes as the mere mouthpieces of these gods. They are mortal and yet they are united with immortals, and are rivals of the gods. But although the idea most promptly associated with them is that of wisdom, they are sometimes mentioned in language which carries us back to the etymological meaning of the name. With their true hymns, we are told, they caused the dawn to arise and the sun to shine for the afflicted

¹ Lassen, *Ind. Alt.*, vol. i., p. 904. Cox, *Aryan Mythology*, vol. i., p. 47. Colebrooke's *Essays*, ii., pp. 310, 312.

² Lassen, *loc. cit.*, tells us that all the brightest stars of the northern firmament were abodes of the Rishis.

³ Vol. i., pp. 413, 414.

Vayu and Manu. The names of the Rishis are variously given, Manu with Bhrigu, Angiras and others being sometimes reckoned among them; but of the whole number seven attained a pre-eminent dignity. With Manu, according to one version, they entered into the ark while the earth lay beneath the waters of the flood," etc. It is impossible not to discern in this description occasional resemblances to the Prometheus myth. The Rishis are of stellar origin, they are symbolical light-conveyers—the notion of physical light passing, here as in other parts of the myth, into that of mental enlightenment. They are mediators between the gods and mankind; the rivals of the former and the friends of the latter. They introduce the dawn and the sunshine. They are also connected, like the Greek Prometheus, with the creation of man and with the traditional Hindu deluge. But in this connection we must observe the mythical hero Manu, for in my opinion he is one of the many offshoots of Prometheus, denoting that aspect of the myth which connects him as creator and benefactor with humanity. In this respect the legend of Manu extends far beyond Hindu tradition, being common to most Indo-Germanic races,¹ indeed our own word man is derived from this legendary ancestor of humanity.

Now, that Manu is related to Prometheus appears to me proved—firstly, by his connection with the star Rishis as already described; secondly, by the derivation of the word from the same roots *Mā*, *Man*, which are found in *Pramathyus*, *Pramantha*, whence we get the Greek name Prometheus, and in Manu, the Greek *Μῑνω*s, and the Teutonic *manu*.² Thirdly, the different meanings of the root are distinctly Promethean, for it signifies, we are told, to measure, weigh, to produce or make³ (Greek *ποιεῖν*). The measuring, moreover, has a prospective significance, for it implies the throwing or *casting forward* the measuring line. As secondary meanings it has to think, to know, to under-

¹ Lassen, vol. i., p. 940. Cox's *Aryan Myth*, vol. ii., p. 87. Max Müller's *Sci. of Lang.*, vol. ii., p. 509.

² Compare Bopp, *Gloss. Comp.*, pp. 285, 293. Pott, *Wurzel-Wörterbuch*, ii., 2, 1, pp. 266, etc.

³ This is its earliest meaning in the Rig-Veda, as we are assured by Max Müller. Compare his edition of the Rig-Veda Sanhita: Hymus to the Maruts, p. 82.

stand, whence we get the Latin *mens*, or mind. Nor is this all ; for the same root represents the reflective and retrospective as well as the prospective aspects of knowledge, in other words the function of Epimetheus as well as of Prometheus—as Sir George Cox tells us the root *Man* is taken also to denote backward thought, remembering and admonishing, whence the proper name Mentor, the adviser.¹ With this may be compared the name Juno Moneta : and thus Athene, when she appears among the suitors before the great vengeance of Odysseus, is naturally said to assume the likeness of Mentor. But a further source of similarity between Prometheus and Manu remains to be indicated. Manu in his Promethean capacity as progenitor and creator of man is probably correlated with Bhrigu, who occupies a similar place in Hindu mythology as the ancestor of the human race. Now Bhrigu, both in derivation and signification, seems to me allied to the Hindu Manu and the Hellenic Prometheus. He is represented as being the son of Manu,² and elsewhere as the son of Varuna, just as Prometheus is descended through Iapetos from the Olympic ruler Ouranos. As the son of Varuna Bhrigu is represented as an ardent seeker after knowledge, who is taught by his father how to attain Brahma.³ The name Bhrigu signifies, moreover, the shining one, and though referable to the lightning may well have been to the planet which more than all the other planetary bodies may claim the attribute of shining. Thus the root of Bhrigu would have precisely the same meaning as Sukra the Sanscrit word for Venus, which is similarly derived from a root signifying to shine. Bhrigu's connection with Venus is further shown by the myth of his son (or grandson) Karja or Usanas, who, besides bearing the name of Venus, enjoys in Hindu mythology the function of being her regent ;⁴ and a still more remarkable point of affinity between Bhrigu and Prometheus is that pointed out by Steinthal, which I give in his own words : " Prometheus created men of clay, and the earth

¹ Cox, *Aryan Myth.*, vol. i., p. 415, note.

² Colebrooke, *Essays*, vol. i., p. 470.

³ Colebrooke, vol. i., pp. 69, 70. Bopp, *Gloss. Comp.*, p. 280. Compare Steinthal in Goldziher, *Hebrew Mythology* (English translation), p. 372.

⁴ Lassen, vol. i., p. 989.

which he used for the purpose was (according to Pausanias) shown near Panopeus in Phokis the seat of the Phlegyans; the Phlegyans therefore considered themselves the first men. The Indians had, moreover, other ideas connected with the Bhrigus, which closely coincide with those held by the Greeks concerning the Phlegyans; especially the conception that Bhrigu, the ancestor of the Bhrigus, like Phlegyas, that of the Phlegyans, was hurled into Tartaros for pride and insurrection against the gods.”¹

Two conclusions seem to me fairly derivable from these various premisses. 1. The connection of the Rishis in an earlier Sabeism with the morning-star planets, especially with Venus. 2. That Manu and Bhrigu seem reminiscences of those aspects of the Promethean myth which make him the creator of mankind. It must be remembered, however, that no attempt is made here to give a definite outline to the Hindu Rishi-Manu myth, such as Hellenic mythology enables us to give to Prometheus. Whenever a myth has been long in existence, and has assumed with its usual versatile plasticity a multiplex aspect, the utmost any cautious thinker will try to effect will be to show that the diversiform outgrowths are correlated, and even in this he will be liable to mistakes. Like various organic remains found in some geological strata we may not be able to join them together into a complete skeleton, and yet they may be so closely related as to leave little doubt that they once formed component parts of a living animal.

It is difficult to determine whether the perpetual transmutation of myths during periods of mythopœic mobility is to be described as natural evolutions or capricious transmutations or as distinct deteriorations of their original forms. Those religionists who believe in what is termed doctrinal development, and who consider every such evolution a natural and providential outgrowth of a doctrinal germ, might well be asked to contemplate the curious kaleidoscopic changes that continually occur in the allied subject of mythology. A tracing of a few such mythical metamorphoses to their original sources and causes might at least have the effect of inducing caution in ascribing a Divine guid-

¹ Steinthal in Goldziher, *ut supra*, p. 373.

ance to every outgrowth of religious doctrine. I have already pointed out that what we find in the Veda seem fragments of an older Sabeism, and that the same phenomenon pertains to the Zendavesta. Thus Prometheus or the morning-star myths appear changed into dawn- or sun-myths. The transformation was indeed inevitable when day-phenomena assumed in men's attention and reverence the place formerly held by night-phenomena. Thus the moon and the stars gave place to the sun. The attributes of the morning star as the herald of day yielded to those of the dawn. The dawn and evening twilight came to be regarded as twins instead of Phosphoros and Hesperos, etc. We find manifold indications of this kind in the Veda, though it may well be questioned whether all those myths relate to the dawn and the sun which some comparative mythologists have assigned to those phenomena. An instance of this transformation from Prometheus to the dawn and the sun we have in the mythical personage Pururavas. The name of this hero means very shining, and it is no more than the epithet frequently given to the planets, and especially to Venus.¹ Although he afterwards becomes immortal he is at first mortal and is described as man. In other words, he stands on the dividing line between mortal and immortal beings, where we find placed all the stellar heroes of ancient mythology. He is denominated Aida the son of Ida, the same name which is given to Agni, the fire god; and lastly and especially, the condition of his acquiring immortality is said to have been his revealing to mankind a certain method of sacrifice which required sacred fire for its performance—this sacred fire being obtained by friction.² Now, remembering the connection which Prometheus the fire-bringer has with this mode of fire-kindling, and also the office attributed to him of being the teacher of mankind, it seems impossible to deny to Pururavas some affinity with the Prometheus myths.

One more Hindu hero has to be mentioned as probably related to Prometheus, I mean Matarisvan. The meaning of this name is not so certain as the office of its possessor. Matarisvan is the fire-bringer or *φωσφόρος*. But in this capacity he may be either a celestial or purely terrestrial being. He may be either

¹ Max Müller, *Chips*, vol. ii., p. 101.

² *Ibid.*, pp. 103, 104.

the morning star which announces and reveals to men the new day, or he may be the personified power that kindles fire by friction, or, once more, he may be a partly celestial partly terrestrial deity symbolising the lightning. Professor Steinthal seems inclined, although not very explicit on the point, to make the agency of Matarisvan entirely terrestrial, at all events to allow him no higher title to a celestial origin than might be claimed by the lightning. In my opinion Matarisvan was originally a stellar hero, the Phosphor who announced and disclosed the hidden day to the eyes of mortals, and who in virtue of this function was naturally transformed to the personified agency that extracted from wood and other combustible materials their latent fire. It certainly seems most natural that the sun as the source of celestial heat should have obtained in the recognition of primitive peoples a priority to earthly fire, and therefore that messengers and sun-heralds should have preceded in time and importance the discoverers of earthly fire through the transition of one function into the other, or the assignment of both functions to the same mythical personage, are ordinary operations of mythopœic fancy. We may, I think, take it as an obvious rule that when fire myths comprehend, as they mostly do among primitive peoples, both celestial and terrestrial phenomena, the former have been esteemed the source of the latter. There is no people in the world which has not felt and acknowledged the influence of the sun, while there are many who are said to have never possessed any knowledge of fire, and of those who have made fire a Fetich, or who have organised various methods of fire worship, all agree in making the origin of fire divine and attributing it to celestial personages. Thus, fire has often been named the "child of the sun," but there is no instance on record of the sun being regarded as the outcome or issue of terrestrial fire. I am far from supposing that the identification of earthly and heavenly fire was an obvious or early conclusion among the primitive races that had discovered the former. The perception that fire and heat, when originated by terrestrial agencies, have the same effect on the human senses or other objects submitted to their power, as the heat and light of the sun, was probably a correlation of long growth and betokened a considerable advance in human thought and methods of comparison.

In all likelihood the stride was as great—other things being equal—as Francklin's identification of the electricity of the lightning with that produced by the human agency of the electric battery.

Passing now from the echoes and fragmentary survivals of the Prometheus star-myth as they are found in Hindu to those which occur in early Iranian mythology, we find ourselves confronted by similar phenomena. We discover, in other words, a transition state of things, the ideas and beliefs of a primitive Sabeism passing into a broader and mere spiritual conception of the ruling powers of the universe. This transition, like that which happened in India, consisted in part of the substitution of day- for night-phenomena, the dawn, the sun, the cloud, the storm superseding the older exclusive worship of the stars. Among the ancient Iranians this antagonism of day and night with the phenomena pertaining to each was accentuated by the religious Reformation of Zoroaster. Indeed it formed the very basis of his teaching. Whatever belonged to the night was evil, just as everything pertaining to the day and the light was good. Hence the stars gradually came to assume the rôle of the enemies of the day. They were regarded as so many thieves that the rays of the sun scattered and put to flight. An exception however seems to have been made for at least some centuries in favour of the planets, the morning stars and some other stellar bodies and constellations, or, to speak more accurately, a twofold conception of them seems to have prevailed. Partly regarded as the evil deos—the ministers of darkness—who like the Greek Titans were arrayed against the powers of light, they seem nevertheless to have retained their primary position as beneficent deities, at least their names occur in the Zendavesta as divinities to be worshipped, though the attributes associated with the names are not always identical. Nor is this uncertain position difficult to understand. In the rivalry between light and darkness regarded as distinctly antagonistic beings, each of them supreme and absolute in his own sphere, it is easy to understand that the stars and moon would share variable and even discordant characteristics. Although attendants on the night and the darkness they are distinctly bodies of light. Indeed the morning stars from their proximity to the dawn might even be

regarded, as in ancient times they actually were, as connected with the day. Oftentimes they were defined as mediatory beings between the night and the day. Their uncertain position in post-Zoroastrian thought is also easily accounted for by the nature of the Reformation the great Bactrian sage endeavoured to effect. He clearly did not attempt to oppose radically all the religious conceptions he found in existence among his countrymen, as much as to give them a new direction and a more ethical and spiritual impulse. His aim was to superimpose on the ancient worship of Iran new divinities or new objects of worship under the old names. He seems to have treated the ancient myths of his country just as Sokrates treated the ancient beliefs of the Greeks, retaining the names but modifying their meanings, or as the early Christian bishops dealt with the beliefs and usages of heathendom when they retained the old heathen festivals and the customs pertaining to them, only giving both to the one and the other a new religious significance. This intermixture of new and old, the supersession of ancient usages and beliefs by later reforming ideas, is one of the most salient peculiarities of the Zendavesta.

One of the foremost divinities of the Zendavesta—the representative at once of the planet Venus and the morning star—is Mithra. This deity is taken generally as the god of light, and is identified with the sun. It may be granted that in the religious evolution both of ancient Persia and India Mithra does ultimately come to mean the sun, or according to some writers he is the god of light¹—the entity or phenomenon considered as an abstraction, and apart from all light-giving bodies. But in early times the name stood for Venus both as a planet and as the morning star (Phosphoros). 1. The word is evidently the same as the Sanscrit *mītra*² (root *mid* to love, with suffix *tra*), which signifies love, and is applied in Hindu mythology both to the sun and also to fire.³ 2. Herodotus tells us that the Persians adored Aphrodite under the name of Mithra. 3. In the older portions of the Zendavesta, *i.e.*, in the second part of the Yasna, Mithra is connected as a twin morning star with Ahura, which is gener-

¹ Compare *Avesta*, traduit par C. de Harlez, vol. i., p. 37.

² Bopp, *Gloss. Comp.*, *ad. voc.*

³ Colebrooke, vol. i., p. 24.

ally taken as a designation of the planet Jupiter.¹ 4. Mithra though possessing distinctively solar attributes is nevertheless mentioned as a being apart from the sun. 5. Occasionally Mithra is called a star, or in the language of ancient Chaldean Sabeism, a watcher (ḡpaḡâno).² 6. Some of the many attributes applied to Mithra are undeniably Promethean, *e.g.*, he presides over Havani the sun-rise. He is a mediator between the gods and men. He is especially distinguished for his gifts and favours to humanity. The cumulative weight of these different characteristics appears to me considerable, and to constitute a sufficient proof of the original identity of Mithra with Prometheus. Indeed the proof is as complete as under the circumstances we have any right to expect. For whatever origin be assigned to Mithra, whether stellar or solar, it is clear that it subsequently passed like all other myths through many and divergent stages of evolution. Indeed the never-ceasing mobility and plasticity that pertain to all myth genera render the identification of variously originated myths, or even the different evolutionary stages of the same myth, a more or less hazardous operation. Those who would see for themselves the many various and to a certain extent disparate ideas that have in the course of ages gathered round Mithra, are recommended to read Dr. Spiegel's enumeration of his attributes in his learned commentary on the Avesta,³ or the Mithra Yesht (hymn to Mithra) in the translations of Dr. Spiegel⁴ or Professor Harlez.⁵ In the latter—probably the supreme original authority for the characteristics of Mithra though evidently compiled at different times—we seem to have the following correlated ideas respecting that deity. He is the planet Venus, a morning star, the morning dawn, the evening twilight, the sun, and lastly light, regarded as an abstract entity. The evolution is however from the stellar to the solar phases of the myths, so that the earliest conception of Mithra in my opinion connects him with Prometheus.

But before leaving the stellar or celestial aspects of the Pro-

¹ Spiegel, *Avesta*, vol. ii., p. 40, note 2.

² Compare Harlez, vol. ii., p. 63, and Spiegel, vol. i., p. 274.

³ Vol i., p. 274; vol. ii., p. 40; vol. iii., p. xxvi.

⁴ Vol. iii., p. 79.

⁵ Vol. ii., p. 226.

metheus myth there is one more astronomical phenomenon which must be noticed as suggestive of the strife between the heavenly powers which was the ground-idea of the Titanomachy—I allude to eclipses, whether solar or lunar. To the early observers of the heavens few appearances were more terrible than an eclipse. The sudden stealing without any presage or warning of some mysterious dark unknown monster upon the sun or moon, destroying for the time its brilliant form, quenching its light and apparently annihilating the orb of day or the pale queen of night, must have been a scene replete with horror for savage races. We can imperfectly imagine the impressions such a sight was calculated to evoke—the struggle for life between celestial powers—the sympathy of the darkened earth with the gradual disappearance of her source of light. Ancient races both Eastern¹ and Western thought they could distinguish the shrieks of the suffering luminaries, while devoured by their foe, and endeavoured to frighten away the enemies of light by shouting, drum-beating and other loud noises.² In Germanic and Scandinavian mythology this moonswolf is connected, probably as a self-metamorphosis or regeneration, with the giant Loki, the god of light,³ who is both identified in older myths with Odin and is represented in his wolfian form as an enemy to the celestial luminaries, and as seeking to devour them by eclipses. Now Loki for his evil deeds and disregard of the wishes of his fellow-gods is represented as being bound until the twilight of the gods, and both in his binding and loosing he develops undeniable Promethean affinities as both Grimm and Thorpe have pointed out.⁴ The latter writer describes Loki *Vinctus* in the

¹ In the East the sun- and moon-devouring monster is generally a dragon, as in the Hindu legend of Râhu. That a similar legend also formed part of Semitic belief in some of its later stages is shown by the Book of Job (iii., 8), where Job, invoking all kinds of evil on his birthday, says:—

“Let the cursers of days curse it,

Who know how to rouse up the dragon”.

In other words—Let its sun be eclipsed by the incantations of those who know how to stir up the dragon to devour it.

² Grimm, *D. M.*, p. 225.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 224.

⁴ Compare Grimm, *D. M.*, p. 225, and Thorpe, *Northern Mythology*, vol. i., p. 78.

following terms: "When the gods had captured Loki they brought him to a cave, raised up three fragments of rock and bored holes through them. They then took his sons Vali and Narfi. Vali they transformed into a wolf and he tore his brother Narfi in pieces. With his entrails they bound Loki over the three stones, one being under his shoulders, another under his loins, the third under his hams; and the bands became iron. Ikadi then hung a venomous snake above his head, so that the poison might drip on his face; but his wife Sigrún stands by him and holds a cup under the dripping venom. When the cup is full, the poison falls on his face while she empties it; and he shrinks from it so that the whole earth trembles. Hence come earthquakes. Then will he lie bound until *raguaröck*, *i.e.*, the twilight of the gods." No doubt there is a startling contradiction involved in making one form of the god of light prey upon the sun and moon which it is said he must ultimately devour. But the discrepancy is not greater than others which characterise ancient myths; and it might in part be accounted for if we were at liberty to suppose the knowledge of these ancient peoples that an eclipse was in reality one source of light suppressing another, or if we could attribute to them the persuasion that light in its moral and metaphysical sense might by its abuse and perversion destroy light. That some such conviction formed a part of Promethean mythology we shall see further on. In any case Loki must be regarded as a Teutonic Prometheus. Indeed, his connection with Hellenic and other forms of the myth is not exhausted by the attributes of binding and loosing which he possesses in common with Satan, Ahriman and Prometheus. As I have already remarked he may claim an affinity with Prometheus regarded as the mist, because the old German definition of the phenomenon called "sun posts" was "Loki is drawing water". While his secondary character as the father of evil and of lies¹ is a recognition of the moral aspect of the Promethean myth, *viz.*, that light may have ill connotations or developments. Perhaps however in Loki's case this idea was an ethical or spiritual adaptation from his light-quenching function when he causes an eclipse.

¹ Thorpe, vol. i., p. 203.

Passing now from celestial to terrestrial forms of the Promethean myth we are met by one which partakes of both characters—I mean the falling lightning. Hence in its personification as Prometheus we have that hero so often described as owing his descent partly to divine partly to human beings, and as sharing in consequence the attributes of immortality and mortality. This twofold aspect of the lightning was probably an inference from its double relation to humanity. The general normal position of the lightning was celestial. It was one of the light-giving powers of heaven. Occasionally however this fire descended rapidly to earth, where it kindled whatever object it might chance to meet. A peculiar sacredness would therefore naturally attach to such undeniable products of celestial fire.¹ Assuming that among some primitive races their first acquaintance with fire was gained from the kindling of a tree by lightning, their account of such an event would naturally take a form not dissimilar from that of the Prometheus legend.² Falling from heaven is thus the ordinary characteristic of all fire deities. Hephaistos possesses it as well as Prometheus. But the mere act of such an earthward descent on the part of a heavenly being was capable of more than one interpretation. Probably its earlier and more obvious construction was that already noticed in relation to showers of falling stars,³ *viz.*, a dispute among celestial fire deities, resulting in the defeat of some of them, in other words a Titanomachy; but it is quite conceivable that when the manifold utility of fire became recognised the same event would have borne a different aspect. The descending fire-god would be represented as actuated by a love for humanity, by sympathy for their fireless unenlightened condition, and by a determination to alleviate it—the motives which according to Aeschylus animated Prometheus himself.

But there was further assimilation between the celestial and terrestrial aspects of the lightning, and that was its discovery

¹ Compare Goldziher, *Hebrew Mythology* (Eng. trans.), p. 372.

² In the North of England the “nud fire” is said to be kindled by an angel striking a tree. Compare Grimm, *D. M.*, p. 574, and Tylor’s *History of Mankind*, pp. 237-8. See, too, Welcker, *Aesch. Tril.*, p. 207.

³ According to Professor Steinthal Japet, the father of Prometheus, means “fallen”. Compare Welcker, as above.

from apparently unlikely sources. Why the dark thunder-cloud should generate brilliant flashes of light was just as inscrutable to early observers as the hiding of the fire in wood or any other combustible material. There was nothing in the material or the matrix in either case which would lead men to expect such a brilliant outcome. It is quite possible that this dissimilarity between parent and offspring might have been anthropomorphised in ancient myths and hence have assumed the mythopœic form of a wise or brilliant child descending from foolish or ignorant parents. One development the phenomenon certainly created, and that is the discoverer of fire, whether heavenly or earthly. This is the function attributed among other fire-discoverers to the Indian deity Matarisvan. To quote Professor Steinthal,¹ "the most striking peculiarity of fire was obviously the necessity of constantly kindling it again afresh, because when lighted it must go out again sooner or later. This aspect was exhibited in the following very simple myth. Agni vanished from the earth—he had hidden himself in a cave. Matarisvan brings him back to men." But sometimes Agni cannot easily be discovered. "Where is he then? Why, where he is found; in the hollow of the cloud from which he soon shines forth; in the hole of the disk in which the stick is turned round and round," etc. We shall have to recur to this function of Prometheus farther on.

III. *Prometheus as Terrestrial Fire.*

Our investigation has shown us that the celestial aspects of the Prometheus myth are somewhat varied in character, in harmony with the diversity existing among heavenly luminaries. First probably symbolising the morning star, the myth passes in some mythologies, *e.g.*, those of ancient India and Persia, into a distinctly solar development. It is also connected directly or indirectly with transient phenomena, as, *e.g.*, eclipses and the lightning. But just as we find this diversity in relation to our subject among the luminiferous bodies and agencies of the heavens, so we find a corresponding difference among the Promethean manifestations of terrestrial fire.

No doubt a clear discrimination between the different kinds

¹ Steinthal in Goldziher, *ut supra*, p. 369.

of heat and light discoverable in terrestrial objects involved no inconsiderable advance in culture. Still we find attempts at a classification of fires made at a very early period, the first perhaps being that presented to us in Iranian mythology as represented by its most authentic exponent the *Zendavesta*.¹ Here we find an enumeration of five kinds of fire, each having its own special designation. First, there is the fire which is found before Ahura-Mazda. Second, the fire which dwells in the bodies of men and beasts. Third, the fire which inhabits trees. Fourth, the lightning-fire which strikes the Dæva Cpenjaghra, whose cry is heard in the thunder. Fifth, the fire in common use among men, which is called the Housemaster. But besides these there are three kinds of fires that inhabit the tops of certain mountains, which are either volcanic eruptions or else sacrificial or altar fires. All of these forms of fires, as we shall find, are connected remotely or intimately with some aspects of the Promethean myth.

Taking first that which the Persians called mountain fire. As I have just observed, this may possibly symbolise volcanoes in active eruption. We can at least readily understand how such fires would have for uncivilised races a peculiarly mysterious and supernatural character. They were not only distinct from, but even opposed to celestial sources of heat and light. Heavenly fires descended, volcanic fires ascended. But both were alike in their independence of human origin and control. We cannot, therefore, be surprised that ancient mythologies exhibit volcanoes in a twofold aspect. The fire is holy and unholy. It is caused by the gods or originated by their adversaries. Thus in Hellenic mythology the craters of volcanoes are represented as the smithies of Hephaistos and his subordinates, and on the other hand as the habitations of the defeated Titans. While in Iranian mythology volcanic fires have sometimes assigned to them the sacredness which pertains to all forms of fire, at others they are regarded as the gates of hell. In their more sacred or diviner character they are sometimes connected by Greek writers with heavenly fire, and are said to have been first kindled by the lightning; indeed the sacredness of volcanic fire is postulated in

¹ Compare Spiegel, vol. iii., p. xv.

later Hellenic mythology by its connection with Hephaistos,¹ and the affinity in his legend between his forge in Olympus and that in the volcanic craters of Lemnos. The braving of this volcanic smithy of Hephaistos and the celestial character of its fire in our present subject is important, for, in all probability, as Welcker has suggested, the theft of Prometheus in that form of the myth adopted by Aeschylus was actually from the Lemnian forge of Hephaistos. There seems an allusion to this in the beginning of the drama, where Kratos addresses Hephaistos:—

For having stol'n thy pride—the gleam of fire
Whence springs all arts—he'th given it to mortals.

The attempt was undoubtedly designated in some early versions of the myth as the Lemnian theft—

Unde ignis cluet mortalibus clam
Divisus, eum doctu' Prometheus
Clepsisse dolo, pœnasque Jovi
Fato expendisse supremo ;²

and Lucian makes Hephaistos accuse Prometheus of having “stolen his fire and left his forge cold”. We hence perceive that in some one or more of its forms the myth might conceivably have been originated by the inhabitants of some volcanic region, possibly the aborigines of the Isle of Lemnos itself, who may well have derived their knowledge of fire, its attributes and uses, from observation of its volcanic effects.

Were myths necessarily homogeneous in conception and development the contradiction between the celestial and infernal attributes of volcanic fires might deserve explanation. But in point of fact most of the natural phenomena which form the basis of mythology possess dual implications. They are originated by heavenly and beneficent or by hellish and maleficent powers, while in relation to men they partake of the dual aspects which in the case of fire and water are indicated by the common proverb of their being good servants but bad masters. A peculiar antagonism of volcanic fires to the powers of heaven would

¹ Compare Welcker, *Aesch. Tril.*, pp. 8, 207. The fire of Mosydos in Lemnos was said to have been derived from the ether (Welcker, p. 1).

² Cicero, *Tusc.*, vol. ii., p. 10.

necessarily be evoked by the identification of the latter as the ruling divinities of the universe. Wherever the sun and moon, the stars and the firmament were regarded as divine, volcanic eruptions would assume *ipso facto* an anticelestial character. At the same time we may remember that Aeschylus unites in one conception the celestial and infernal properties of volcanic fires when he makes Hephaistos forge his red-hot bolts on the summit of Etna while at the roots of the mountain Tiphon lies, and, notwithstanding his cinerised condition by the bolt of Zeus, occasionally vomits forth streams of lava to the ruin and devastation of "the level fields of fruit-abounding Sicily".¹

Turning now to the more ordinary manifestations of terrestrial fire, it is evident that wherever it was not originated by volcanoes, by lightning, or possibly in some cases by concentrating the sun's rays in a lens or mirror of some transparent stone, it must have been artificially produced. Here the common function of Prometheus already noticed assumes a peculiar prominence. He is the first discoverer of fire-making. Wherever the method of igniting wood or any other combustible material was connected with a mythical hero, the legend took naturally a more or less Promethean form. Hence we find that races widely apart and not sharing so far as can be known a common tradition agree in assigning the discovery of fire to some semi-divine personage, whose co-operation is needed as often as it is educed out of its combustible matrix. Such a rekindling was regarded as a sacred operation. It was oftentimes invested with such solemnities as to make it a religious rite, and the fire thus freshly created was esteemed to possess a peculiar virtue whether for religious purposes or, as in the well-known case of the "nud fire" of the ancient Germans, for curing ailments both of man

¹That the association between volcanic craters in activity and the groans and struggles of supposed monsters imprisoned beneath them is one naturally formed is shown by Lady Brassey's interesting *Voyage of the "Sunbeam"*. Speaking of the volcano Kilauea in Hawaii she remarks: "The violent struggles of the lava to escape from its fiery bed, and the loud and awful noises by which they were at times accompanied, suggested the idea that some imprisoned monsters were trying to release themselves from their bondage with shrieks and groans and cries of agony and despair at the futility of their efforts".

and beast.¹ This medical significance of Prometheus will meet us a little farther on. The supernatural character of fire-making is, as we might have expected, diversely expressed in the different legends on the subject. With the Greek form of the myth may be compared the Hindu tradition of Matarisvan already alluded to, who brings back the fire-god Agni when he occasionally vanishes and hides himself in a cave.² Traditions of a similar kind are met with among savage races. Thus we read that a traveller was told by a native of Van Diemen's Land that his ancestors had no means of making fire before their acquaintance with Europeans. They got it first from the sky and preserved it by carrying fire-brands about with them, and if these went out they looked for the smoke of the fire of some other party, or for smouldering remains of a lately abandoned fire of their own. This curious account fits with the Tasmanian myth recorded by Mr. Milligan, which tells how fire was thrown down like a star by two black fellows who are now in the sky, the twin stars Castor and Pollux.³ The reverence manifested by other races for the methods employed to kindle fire also proves their recognition of its sacred character. The root-thought of this conception, as of every portion of the Promethean myth, was doubtless the widespread belief in the celestial origin and attributes of fire. To men capable of a certain amount of ratiocination fire would present itself, as I have above remarked, in the character of a terrestrial child of the sun.⁴ We find this combination of sun and fire as objects of worship among some ancient races, though not so often as to prove that the conclusion was general or spontaneously adopted.⁵

The methods of artificial fire-making that have obtained among primitive races are various. They have recently been made the subject of exhaustive investigation by anthropologists. One result of these researches has been to prove that the method

¹ Grimm, *D. M.*, p. 571. Comp. Tylor, *History of Mankind*, pp. 258-61.

² Steinthal in Goldziher, *ut supra*, p. 369.

³ Tylor, *ut supra*, pp. 237-8.

⁴ One of the ancient Hellenic legends of Prometheus represents him as lighting, with the assistance of Athênê, his torch at the chariot of Helios.

⁵ Waitz, *Anthropologie*, vol. iii., p. 181.

most common to Aryan races was the fire drill. This instrument it is said first gave rise to the Prometheus myth, the Sanscrit word for it being *Pramantha*, but it is quite impossible to assert, as some writers seem inclined to do, that the myth could have had no other origin. The ordinary heat- and light-giving powers of the heavenly bodies, the beneficent effect of the sun's rays, the apparent descent of the lightning flash, would of themselves be sufficient to account for the first inception of the myth, and these phenomena would probably lend themselves to personification more readily than the forcible extraction of fire from dry wood by means of friction. Probably, too, the idea of Prometheus the light giver as a celestial personage was more in harmony with his stellar origin than with the artificial production of fire. Aeschylus, as we shall find, unites the two conceptions of his celestial parentage and his terrestrial derivation from wood-friction by recognising his kindred with the Olympian deities, and by the myth of his conveying fire in the hollow of a fennel rod. We must however concede that the connection of the fire drill with the Prometheus myth is capable of accounting for more than one of its most peculiar features. Thus we can understand how, when the drill became the terrestrial symbol of fire-making and thereby of animal heat, vitality, etc., a transference of the same idea to modes of human generation became possible,¹ and hence how the conception of Prometheus as man-maker might conceivably have taken its rise. A similar correlation of the man-forming and fire-giving attributes of Prometheus is no doubt derivable from his relation to the art of pottery, as we shall soon see. We may indeed take it for granted that the original creation of man by means of the plastic art was a much more ancient conception than his generation by ordinary processes.

Once grant fire to be in origin and character divine, we can understand how operations effected by it were even on that account alone held to possess a sacred character; and hence how the arts of pottery, metal-working, etc., are found occasionally to have Promethean affinities. The power especially was regarded as the outcome of divine inspiration by races widely

¹ Comp. Steinthal in Goldziher, p. 388.

apart, who could never have shared, so far as can be shown, a common tradition. Nor is this altogether inexplicable. An art whose products were so indispensable to mankind even in elementary stages of their development would of necessity be ascribed to divine or semi-divine sources, and this conception might obtain among dwellers in hot countries to whom fire worship was for climatic reasons unknown. Among the Greeks Prometheus was regarded as the tutelary patron or originator of the art of modelling, which would imply a connection with the fictile art independently of that derived from his association with fire, although if we accept Goguet's theory of the commencement of the Ceramic art¹ fire must have played a more important part in its rudimentary stages than plastic skill. Both were however combined in determining the relation of Prometheus to Greek pottery. Not only was he regarded by the Athenian potters as the protecting deity of their craft, but all the Attic artists in clay were accustomed, as Lucian tells us, to call themselves Prometheuses. It may even be questioned whether there was not among these fictile artists something approaching a cult of Prometheus. In his function as light-bearer he was certainly regarded as the founder of the torch-races; indeed, he is himself denominated the torch-carrier. Welcker tells us that the special torch-race of the Panathenaia instituted in his honour started from the so-called Altar of Prometheus at the approach to the Temple of Athene, and thence took its course towards the city.² On this same altar was an image of Hephaistos, but Prometheus as the more ancient and renowned of the two was distinguished by his sceptre. The rewards of all the Panathenaic contests seem to have been connected with the Ceramic art, consisting as they did of the finest specimens of Attic ware filled with oil. Similar veneration for Prometheus was found among the inhabitants of Panopeus in Phokis, where, according to Pausanias, stood a temple of unbaked bricks containing a statue of Pentelic marble intended probably to represent Prome-

¹ Comp. Tylor's *History of Mankind*, pp. 273-6.

² In this contest the laggards were wont to receive blows with the open hand (*κεραμικαὶ πλῆγαι*) from their brethren of the craft in order to quicken their movements. Comp. Aristoph., *Frogs*, 1093.

theus or Aesklepios.¹ It was from the sandy-coloured earth in this neighbourhood that Prometheus was said to have formed the human race, and Pausanias, who made the experiment, affirms that the rocks found there have the smell of human flesh, though Colonel Leake, who appears to have repeated the experiment, gravely assures us that he was unable to detect it.² That the formation of mankind was especially connected in the minds of primitive races with the art of pottery is a well-attested fact. Nor can it be asserted to be absolutely devoid of probability to the rudimentary faculties and methods of early thinkers. For however distinct may appear to us the modelling of a fictile vase and the birth and growth of a human being, men in an early stage of culture found no difficulty in assimilating the formative processes in either case. Besides they could not help noticing that the remains of all organic beings when committed to the ground mouldered and were dissolved into earthly constituents, and this early acquired experience of "earth to earth, ashes to ashes, dust to dust," would not unreasonably serve as a warrant of the corresponding induction "earth from earth," etc. Hence we find a widely extended tradition of the creation of man from clay. Indeed, of all methods by which men in primitive times tried to account for the commencement of their race, this was the most commonly adopted. This fact is so fully attested as to render an enumeration of these traditions quite unnecessary; but the belief once recognised we have no difficulty in perceiving its ulterior implications, as for instance the junction in the Prometheus legend of the creator of man with the inventor of the Ceramic art, and the reverence which some savage races have been found to pay to every kind of pottery.³

Akin to the Promethean origin of the Ceramic art is the similar relation of the Titan to the art of smithery or metal working. Both arts alike exemplify the intellectual faculty of shaping and modelling in combination with mechanical processes accomplished by means of fire. The metal smelter and the smith were therefore as well as the potter invested by ancient races with semi-divine attributes, especially with the Promethean

¹ Welcker, *Aesch. Tril.*, p. 121, note 151.

² *Northern Greece*, vol. ii., p. 111.

³ Comp., e.g., Waitz, *Anthropologie*, vol. ii., pp. 182-3.

characteristic of beneficence to humanity. Thus the Aeschylean Prometheus claims to have discovered to mankind the various arts connected with the working of metals

underneath the earth.

What benefits were hidden unto men
As brass and iron, silver, gold, who's he
Would say he'd found them before me? No man
I know who idly does not wish to vaunt.

No doubt this claim of Prometheus conflicts somewhat with the office and prerogatives of Hephaistos. In another place Aeschylus seems to imply that the latter deity had a prior right to be considered as the possessor of divine fire. But in truth there seems little distinction between the myths of Prometheus and Hephaistos, excepting that the former is regarded as imparting the uses of fire to men, while Hephaistos is especially the smith of Olympus, whose craft and activities were confined to the celestials.¹ Some approximations to the smith function of Prometheus are found in other cognate myths. Thus in Genesis Tubal Cain, the inventor of metal working, is described as belonging to the family of the Cainites, *i.e.*, to the race that especially set itself to oppose Jahve. More significantly still the Book of Henoch, as we have seen, makes Azazel, the chief of the rebel angels,² the instructor of mankind in all kinds of metal work; while the Promethean affinities of the Scandinavian Loki are thus summarised by Sir George Cox: ³ "Like Hephaistos, a god of fire, Loki resembles him also in his halting gait and in the uncouth figure which provokes the laughter of the gods, and if we are not told that like him Loki was hurled out of heaven yet we can see him bound for his evil deeds, and, like Prometheus, he shall be set free we are told at the end of the world, and

¹ On the connection of Hephaistos and Prometheus compare Welcker, *Aesch. Tril.*, p. 171, and the same author's *Griech. Götterlehre*, i., pp. 756-57. In the latter passage Welcker points out that an Homeric hymn to Hephaistos ascribes to that deity the instruction of men in the works of Athene, before which event men lived like wild beasts in mountain caves. Hephaistos is also according to some legends the creator of man out of the ground.

² Azazel, Satan, Hephaistos and Prometheus have all alike the characteristic of having fallen from heaven.

³ *Aryan Myth.*, vol. ii., p. 200.

shall hurry in the form of a wolf to swallow the moon, as the deliverance of Prometheus is to be followed by the overthrow of his tormentor. Hence the Norse phrase, 'Loki er or böndum,' answering to the expression, 'Der Teufel ist frei gelassen,' the devil is loose." Nor is the belief in the sacred origin of ironwork limited to those races that possess elaborate mythologies. The treatment of metal vessels in the so-called bronze and iron ages, and the reverence of some savage races for similar products at the present day, seem to prove that the belief has been at different times very widely diffused.¹

Another form of earthly fire connected with some aspects of the Prometheus myth is animal heat. What amount of ratiocinative power was requisite to connect physical fire with the warmth and vitality of animal life is difficult to state. The classification of fires already mentioned as having been in use among the ancient Persians proves that heat was regarded by them as a necessary constituent not only of animal but even of vegetable life. As regards the former, it is quite conceivable that the older Hellenic form of the Promethean creation of man which represented the Titan as modelling men of clay and animating them with divine fire might in some cases have been transferred to other living beings, while the contrast between the coldness of a corpse and the glow in the living organisms of all warm-blooded animals could not but have struck the minds even of uncultivated savages. That heat was a necessary and not improbably a divinely originated factor of animal life was at any rate a conclusion early attained. Among the Ionic philosophers of Greece, for example, fire soon came to be regarded as the vital force that animated passive matter, and in the systems of Anaximenes and Empedokles it assumed for this reason a prominent place. Indeed the fourfold division of the elements, of which fire was one, taught by the latter thinker and reasserted by Aristotle may be said to have prevailed in European thought up to the time of Descartes. Nor is it difficult to discern the ratiocination which made heat or fire an indispensable condition of vegetable growth. The influence of the sun's heat on vegetation was itself a suggestion of the motive power of heat, while the ordinary appearance of fire and

¹ Waitz, *Anthropologie*, vol. ii., pp. 385, 466.

its operation on combustible materials sanctioned the idea that it was self-endued with motion, whence the inference of its life would not be difficult in accordance with the reasoning that whatever moves must possess life. These considerations will enable us to understand why fire when regarded as a fetich has been defined as an animal. According to Herodotus the ancient Egyptians thus classified it,¹ and a similar connection of fire with vitality is clearly traceable in the beliefs of many savage races. Not improbably it was this conception that originated the superstition of the "Noth-feuer" or nud fire once so prevalent among all branches of the Teutonic race. The nud fire was fire newly kindled through which were driven animals that were weakly or diseased, doubtless with the idea that they derived from the process a new accession of vital energy. This superstition still lingers in remote districts both of Germany and of England.

More distinctly Promethean however is the next stage of this assimilation of physical fire with animal life, I mean its identity with the mind and general intellectual faculties of man. This is the fact especially embodied in the Aeschylean version of the myth. Not that Prometheus in this drama bestows life on mankind according to the older form of the legend, but he is the especial source of mental spiritual life, he denotes the application of thought-powers to the progress and civilisation of humanity, he signifies that advanced stage of ratiocination wherein knowledge is discriminated as possessing a biform and occasionally self-antagonistic character, he symbolises that advance of inductive reasoning which connected intellectual vigour with physical vitality without identifying one with the other after the manner of materialists. How thoroughly the idea of Divine fire as the motive influence of inspiration has passed into the language and thought-conceptions of different races and religions we need not stop here to point out;² we shall have a further

¹ Herod., vol. iii., p. 16. Compare Schultze, *Fetischismus*, p. 187.

² One of the most poetical applications of the idea among modern interpreters is that of Herder. After dwelling on the different circumstances of the myth that prove themselves capable of a symbolical interpretation, he proceeds: "Alle diese Umstände sind ein so weicher Stoff zur Bildung eines geistigen Sinnes in ihren Gestalten, dass sie uns zuzurufen scheinen

opportunity of dealing with this and similar metaphysical significations of the myth when we come to examine their main source in the immortal drama of Aeschylus.

The various religious meanings and uses of fire, whether sacrificial, lustrative or divinatory, seem to be based on a Promethean conception, so far at least as the sacredness of the element is ascribed to its celestial origin. To the Titan Aeschylus attributes the rudimentary teachings of the sacrificial worship of the Olympian deities as it was observed with little variation throughout Greece.

The smoothness of intestines and what hue
Possessing would give pleasure to the gods,
The lucky streaks of the gall-bladder's lobe
And fat-enveloped limbs; and having roast
The long chine to an art hard to be found,
I guided mortals.

This haruspical art was especially cultivated by the Etruscans, from whom it passed to the Romans. It comprised not only the appearances presented by the intestines of the sacrificial victims but the form and direction of the flame that consumed them as well as of the smoke that arose from their burning. But the peculiar sacredness of fire as the element best adapted for serving up offerings to the gods is a belief by no means confined to the Greeks. Whenever sacrifices have been deemed an acceptable mode of worship, the cultus has with rare exceptions been accompanied by a conviction of the sanctity of the fire employed for the purpose. This idea is found among ancient peoples both of the eastern and western hemispheres, and it forms the ground-thought of the sacrificial observances of the Semitic race.¹ Probably the root-thought underlying this widely diffused notion was the identity in attributes of fire with sunshine. Once the belief in the divine nature of the celestial bodies and especially of the sun was attained the conclusion would inevitably follow

‘gebrauchet das Feuer, das Prometheus euch brachte! Lasset es heller und schöner glänzen: denn es ist die Flamme der *immerfortgehenden Menschenbildung*’” (Herder, *Sämmt. Werke*, vol. xv., p. 151).

¹On the religious significance of fire among the Jews, compare Ewald, *Alterthümer*, p. 30, and his *Jahrbuch d. Bibl. Wissenschaft*, vol. xi., p. 39.

that no offering could be so acceptable to them as that served up by an element akin to the sun. A further connection of the sacrificial offerings of the Greeks with the myth of Prometheus is suggested by their sharing alike the property of forecasting the future. The haruspex who from an inspection of the victim's intestines attempted to foretell coming events was exercising a peculiarly Promethean function. Not that this prophetic function was confined to the sacrifices; the flame which consumed them as well as sacred fire otherwise obtained and employed was credited with the power of determining the secrets of the future. This art of pyromancy is one of those branches of human science which the Prometheus of Aeschylus claims to have taught mankind:—

. . . the fiery signs
Unlearned hitherto I now made clear.

In ancient times this formed one of the most common methods of divination. The professor of the occult art claimed to discern in the shape and direction of the flame and smoke clear intimations of the will of heaven. In the expressive words of Calderon:—

La grande Piromancia
Verás, quando en vivo fuego
En los papeles del lumeo
Caracteres de luz leo.¹

Here also might come in the medical and lustratory properties of sacred fire. We have already noticed that the nud fire was supposed to possess curative and revivifying powers on all things submitted to its action, and Greek mythology supplies us with at least one instance (Triptolemos) of a man who acquires immortality by means of purification by fire.²

IV. Medical.

It was an inevitable outcome of the story of Prometheus that it should be held to refer to the art of medicine. The more ancient form of the myth which regarded him as the creator of

¹ "Los Encantos de la Culpa."

² Welcker, *Gr. Götterlehre*, vol. i., p. 660, who, however, thinks it might have been borrowed from Asia.

the human race would of itself suggest a power over human infirmities, while his more peculiar office as the bestower of intellectual life and vigour would naturally be held to signify power over mental diseases. Aeschylus in his enumeration of the benefits conferred by him on man gives a prominent place to his instruction in the healing art. He contrasts their anti-Promethean condition with their subsequent enlightenment :—

Chiefest, indeed, when any man fell ill
There was no remedy ; no solid drug,
Nor salve, nor draught, but lacking medicines
Men were reduced to skeletons until
I show'd them compounds of mild remedies
By which they guard them from all maladies.

In harmony with this conception of the Promethean office is the use of the term Promethean as an epithet of medicine, and especially to distinguish the drug by which Medeia rendered men invulnerable :—

*φάρμακον, ὃ ῥά τε φασὶ Προμήθειον καλέεσθαι.*¹

This redoubtable “Pharmakon” was said to be the prepared juice of a certain plant which sprang up when the blood of the vulture-devoured Titan dropped on the earth. One might almost imagine that the legend itself was nothing but the concrete presentation of the moral influence which the myth of Prometheus was calculated to exercise on all who were capable of entering into and imbibing its spirit. Certainly few more potent lessons in the art of acquiring invincibility than the spectacle of Prometheus Vincetus have ever been set before mankind.

V. *Historical.*

The relation of myth to history constitutes one of the most important branches of the general subject of mythology. Roughly it might be defined as the relation of the ideal to the actual, of imagination to reality, and in some cases of the supernatural to the natural. In primitive times there was little discrimination between the two, historical facts being idealised and historical personages mythicised just as readily as the myth was trans-

¹ *Apollonii Argonautica*, book iii., line 845.

formed into history. Given the operation of any natural element, as, for example, fire, and we have no difficulty in comprehending how its effect for good or for evil might be transmuted into human agencies. Ancient mythology abounds in instances of such a transformation. What actually took place in the Prometheus myth was this. The agency of fire—beneficial for the most part—was mythicised into the divine personage Prometheus, and the Titan was afterwards translated by euhemerising and rationalising methods into certain wise personages illustrious for their efforts to enlighten mankind. Various examples of the latter process are found both in ancient and modern history. A very old Hellenic tradition historified the binding and freeing of Prometheus by maintaining that he was a Seythian king who was bound by his subjects because he could not deliver them from the devastating power of the river Aëtös, but was afterwards delivered by Herakles, who turned the course of the river.¹ A more generally accepted tradition is that suggested by Theophrastus that Prometheus was a wise man who lived in ancient times and who first taught philosophy to men. This was the view that especially commended itself to later Greek and Roman writers, and was readily accepted by the Christian Fathers and the chroniclers of the middle ages. In the *Chronicon* of Capiodorus, for instance, Prometheus has his place among supposed kings of Assyria. Under a certain Altadas we find it noted, “Hujus temporibus fuit Prometheus vir sapiens,”² while other monkish chroniclers surmise that he was contemporary with Kekrops in Athens, or that he lived during the sojourn of the Israelites in Egypt. This conception of Prometheus as a veritable historical personage may be said to have survived until comparatively recent times.³ Indeed it is by no means uncommon in our own days; one of the latest attempts to make the

¹ Compare Petersen in *Ersch und Gruber*, vol. lxxxii., p. 4, and Lobeck, *Aglaophamus*, p. 987.

² *Max. Bibl. Vit. Patr.*, vol. xi., p. 1355.

³ In Sir Isaac Newton's chronology, for example, we have the following dates: 968 B.C. Sesak having carried on his victories to Mount Caucasus, leaves his nephew Prometheus there to guard the pass.

937 B.C. The Argonautic expedition. Prometheus leaves Mount Caucasus, being set at liberty by Herakles.

characteristics of the Titan as depicted by Aeschylus fit in with those of an undoubted historical hero being his identification with Themistokles, mainly on account of the line which denominates Prometheus :—

τῆς ὀρθοβούλου Θέμιδος αἰπυμῆτα παῖ.¹

Probably however few modern students of Aeschylus's noble drama would care to limit and, if the expression be allowed, to terrestrialise its profound implications by direct association with any personage born of human mould.

VI. *Moral and Metaphysical.*

Coming now to the last and chiefest division of our subject—the moral and metaphysical signification of the myth as set forth in the drama of Aeschylus—we must cast a cursory glance at its earlier presentation given us by Hesiod and other Greek writers. For although it be true that the great philosophic dramatist has discarded as unsuited for his purpose many of the more ancient features of the myth, yet the ethical and intellectual signification he imparted to it is not absolutely wanting to its earlier forms. Indeed this, as we have already observed, is a noteworthy characteristic of the earliest Hellenic speculations on human knowledge, as to which we might almost say that the remote tendencies and results of knowledge were realised contemporaneously with its first acquirement.

The Hesiodic form of the myth seems to have started with the notion so widely disseminated among different ancient races of a golden age—an epoch of human perfection and happiness during which men were high in favour with the gods, and enjoyed the blessings of fire. This state of primæval happiness was disturbed by Prometheus, who attempted to rival Zeus in foresight. At a sacrifice at Mecone he divided a bull in two parts, enclosing the best portions in the skin and putting the

¹ W. W. Lloyd's *Age of Pericles*, vol. i., p. 329. This theory, though plausibly and learnedly urged, seems rebutted by the fact that Aeschylus does not lay any particular stress on the patriotism, etc., of Themistokles in other places in his writings (especially in the *Persæ*) where, on the supposition of his high estimate of him, we should naturally have expected to find it.

stomach on the top for one part, while the other consisted of the bones covered with the fat. Zeus then bidden to choose made the mistake of selecting the latter, though it is inconsistently added that he fell into the error wittingly. To avenge himself on Prometheus and on the human race of which he was regarded as the friendly deity, Zeus withdrew from mortals the use of fire. But this privation was soon frustrated by Prometheus, who secretly stole fire from Olympus and conveyed it to men in a fennel rod. Doubly foiled by the superior subtlety of his rival, Zeus now adopted another mode of punishing his human *protégés*. He commanded Hephaistos to form a virgin of earth, and having given her life he caused her to be adorned by Aphrodite and her sister deities with all the seductive graces that could fascinate men. He then sent her by Hermes to Epimetheus, the brother of Prometheus and a sharer in his influence over the powers and destiny of mankind. Prometheus had warned his brother against receiving any present from Zeus, but Epimetheus with his customary forgetfulness or blundering recklessness despised the caution and accepted Pandora. This ill-omened alliance soon resulted in a plentiful crop of ills for humanity. Prometheus had enclosed in a jar the evils that might befall mortals. Pandora opened the jar and let them loose with the single exception of Hope, on whom the lid of the jar fell before he could escape. Such is the outline of the myth as given by Hesiod. We cannot however say that the Hesiodic representation of it is either uniform or consistent. It evidently discloses traces of diverse origin and elaboration. Probably like all the more important of the early Greek legends found in the works of Hesiod, the story of Prometheus was collected from different local traditions and recounted in the crude form in which we have them, without any attempt to harmonise their discrepant utterances. But this notwithstanding, it is clear that the Hesiodic presentation of Prometheus contains some elements of speculative and rational truth. It shows us the human intellect in the act of contemplating with a retrospective and comprehensive glance the result of knowledge attainments. It is an investigation of the tree of knowledge combined with the admission of the mixed nature of its fruitage. Thus we have the indication, perhaps unconscious, of the root-thought of all know-

ledge myths—the inherent rivalry between the independent reason of man and the popular or theological conception of the Supreme Being, or as the antinomy may be described, between man with his sense of justice and freedom and the inexorable laws of Nature. With Hesiod, Prometheus is the representative of reason, foresight, subtlety and ambition; the symbol not only of the rights of knowledge but also of its occasional abuses. In virtue of this twofold character he comes into conflict with Zeus, the ruler of gods and men. Hesiod also makes fire—the physical symbol of mind—to be in its origin and properties divine. Not less significant is the root-principle of his legend of Pandora—that the gifts of the gods do not infallibly contribute to the happiness of men; while his account of the relation existing between Prometheus and Epimetheus discloses a profound acquaintance with the dual character of the human faculties and a full appreciation of those that are altogether rational contrasted with those that are only imperfectly so.¹ But the intel-

¹ The relation of Epimetheus to Prometheus, variously expressed as it is in ancient mythology, forms one of the most interesting portions of the story of Prometheus. The most perfunctory glance and the greatest possible dislike to rationalising ancient myths, must recognise the insight it discloses both into the nature of the human faculties and into their relation to the powers of lower animals. Epimetheus as “After Thought” represents the personification indicated by Pindar (*Pyth.*, v.) when he speaks of “Excuse the daughter of repentance (change of purpose) tardily wise”. But the duality in human faculties denoted by the brotherhood of Prometheus and Epimetheus admits of more than one interpretation.

I. In relation to human faculties Epimetheus represents the ability of recognising mistakes in the past without the power of remedying them in the future. He symbolises the feelings and instincts of a thoughtless child contrasted with the prudence and caution of the grown man. His antinomy with Prometheus may be variously stated, as, for example, unreason against reason, recklessness against prudence, after-sight as against foresight, flesh as against spirit.

II. In relation to the rest of the animal kingdom “Epimetheus *v.* Prometheus” represents the distinction between brutes and men.

Thus in the form of the myth quoted by Plato in the *Protagoras*, man by his reason, the gift of Prometheus, is superior to all other animals, although they have been gifted by Epimetheus with physical powers of self-protection denied to him; or in the form of the legend alluded to by Horace (*Carm.*, i., 16), the contrast is made to depend on

lectual and ethical implications of the myth to be found in Hesiod are comparatively few and insignificant compared with those of the Prometheus of Aeschylus. Hesiod, it must be remembered, is merely the antiquarian poet, the indiscriminating collector of ancient legends, careless, probably ignorant of their causes, modes of evolution or any esoteric meaning they might chance to possess. Aeschylus on the contrary is the philosopher who instinctively recognises and evolves their inmost meaning—the genuine dramatic poet who knows how to weave the uncouth materials into a connected plot and to invest it with artistic beauty and human interest. The works of the former resemble the old chronicles which constituted the rough material of Shakespeare's plays; the genius of the latter may be likened to the true dramatic instinct which from such a grotesque matrix sufficed to evolve a Hamlet or Othello. Compared with preceding legends one of the most noteworthy features of the Prometheus of Aeschylus is its omission or modification of the characteristics that pertained to the older versions of the myth. Thus there was an ancient tradition which as we have noticed regarded Prometheus as the creator of mankind. This Aeschylus rejects, or at least passes over in silence, as unsuited to his drama. In his trilogy, so far as we can gather, man was already a denizen of earth during the Olympian dynasties prior to Zeus. But he had always existed in a wretchedly uncivilised condition until his great benefactor Prometheus procured for him the heavenly fire. Similarly Aeschylus rejects the Hesiodic legend of a golden age, and evidently believed in the gradual advance of humanity from rude beginnings rather than in its degradation from a state of primæval perfection and bliss. He also leaves out of his treatment all reference to Epimetheus and Pandora, which could only have incommoded his plot and detracted from its natural progress and simplicity. Nor does he notice the Hesiodic description of Prometheus as an incarnation of craft and subtlety except as the imputation of his enemies. In a word, the whole interest of his drama is centred in the mutual relations of Prometheus and Zeus, regarded as the respective representations of intellectual independence and comparative extent of faculties; man having concentrated in him all the powers that exist dispersedly and isolatedly in inferior animals.

unselfish virtue on the one hand and autocratic power on the other.

Turning now to *Prometheus Vincetus*—the great skeptical or knowledge drama of antiquity—our purpose of discovering its meaning will be best attained by placing before the reader a translation of its principal portions, omitting episodes not immediately connected with the main plot.

The scene opens with a desert plain, the barrenness of which is utterly unrelieved by any feature except the appropriate one of rough craggy rocks. On these lies extended the gigantic body of the Titan bound with immense chains. Two ministers of the autocratic ruler of Olympus, bearing the significant names of Strength (Kratos) and Force (Bia) and armed with implements suitable to their office, are discovered conversing with Hephaistos.

Kr. We've reached the plain and far-off boundary
Of earth—the Scythian tract—a manless waste ;
And now, Hephaistos, thou must heed the hests
The Sire imposed on thee—this crafty one
To bind on lofty rugged rocks, in links
Impregnable of adamantine chains
For having stol'n thy pride—the gleam of fire,
Source of all arts, he'th given it to mortals.
For this crime he behoves to give the gods
Due satisfaction, so he may be taught
The government of Zeus to venerate
And from his philanthropic mood to cease.

Heph. For you, Kratos and Bia, Zeus's hest
Is now complete, no hindrance have you left,
But I have little courage by sheer force
To bind a kindred god to th' wintry crag,
Yet must I by all means e'en dare these things
For grievous is't to slight the Father's words.
High scheming son of right—advising Themis—
I loath must bind thee, loath with brazen chains
Indissoluble, to this lonely crag
Where neither voice nor form of any mortal
Shalt thou see : but roasted by the sun's fierce blaze
The bloom of thy complexion shalt thou lose,
And joyfully to thee star-spangled night
Shall veil the light, and in its turn the sun
Disperse the hoar-frost of the dawn. And aye

The woe of present evil shall oppress ;
For he's unborn who shall deliver thee,
Such being the gain of thy philanthropy.
For thou a god, not crouching 'neath the wrath
Of gods, on mortals hast conferred high honours
More than just. For which offence thou must stand guard
Upon this dreary crag, in upright posture
Sleepless—never bending knee, while manifold
Laments and bootless groanings shalt thou vent,
For Zeus's wrath is hard to be assuaged,
And every one is harsh whose rule is new.

Kr. Let be—why hang'st thou back and vainly pitiest ?
Why hat'st thou not the god to gods most hateful
Who hath betrayed thy honour unto men ?

Heph. Kindred and friendship are of mighty force.

Kr. No doubt ; but Zeus's words how canst thou slight ?
Dost thou not rather stand in awe of this ?

Heph. Ah ! ruthless wert thou ever and audacious.

Kr. For this one to bemoan yields him no cure,
Nor do thou labour vainly bootless things.

Heph. O bitterly detested handicraft !

Kr. Why dost thou hate it, since, in simple truth,
Of present ills thy art is not the cause ?

Heph. But still I wish some other had obtained it.

Kr. To the gods all things are grievous but to rule,
For none is free excepting Zeus alone.

Heph. I know, and naught against it can I urge.

Kr. Wilt thou not therefore haste to throw thy chains
Around this wretch, that Zeus spy thee not loit'ring ?

Heph. The manacles prepared thou here mayst see.

Kr. Well, take and with thy hammer rivet them
With force about his hands. Nail him to the rock.

Heph. The task draws nigh its close and doth not lag.

Kr. Smite hard, make tighter, let no point be slack,
For from th' impossible he'll find a way.

Heph. At least this arm's indissolubly bound.

Kr. Now this, too, fasten safe, that he may learn
How much in cunning he is less than Zeus.

Heph. Excepting this one none could justly blame me.

Kr. Now drive with mighty force right through his chest
The adamantine wedge's ruthless point.

Heph. Alas, Prometheus, I bemoan thy woes !

Kr. What ! lagg'st again and Zeus's foes bewail'st ?
Take heed lest some time thou bemoan thyself.

Heph. Thou see'st a sight unbearable to eyes.

Kr. I see this wretch has met with his deserts ;
But cast about his ribs these belly-chains.

Heph. I must do this, yet urge me not too much.

Kr. Indeed, I both will urge and force thee to it ;
Get down and forcibly link round his legs.

Heph. At last the work, with no small pains, is done.

Kr. Now smite the piercing fetters with all force,
For stern is he who overlooks the work.

Heph. Thy tongue in accord moves with thy harsh form.

Kr. Be soft thyself ; but my audacity
And harsh demeanour lay not to my charge.

Heph. Let's go, since now ensnackled are his limbs.

Kr. (addressing Prometheus) :—

Now then be insolent, and having stol'n
The honours of the gods, on day-lived beings
Bestow them. How will mortals profit thee
To free thee from these woes ? Falsely the gods
Call thee Prometheus. Prometheus thou dost need,
Who aiding, thou mayst slip out of this trap.

This introductory scene serves to reveal fully the *motif* of the drama and the mutual relation of its chief personages. It is separated, as we may see, by an immeasurable interval as regards thought and reflection from the crude ideas of the Hesiodic or any prior period. The phenomena of nature are here transmuted into phases of thought. The heaven-storming aspects of certain terrestrial appearances are personified as the antagonisms of supernatural beings. Fire in its various manifestations, as the lightning flash, the kindling of dry wood by friction, receives here its highest symbolic development, and light, in its manifold origins from sun and star as well as from terrestrial fire, arrives at its supremest metaphysical climax. The former becomes the fitting emblem of intellectual force and independence, the latter is regarded under its spiritual parallelism of progression, knowledge, and enlightenment. It is against these beneficent influences—personified by Prometheus—that the ruling deity of Olympus is set in array. Zeus symbolising lawless power and irresponsible omnipotence is fittingly represented by his ministers,

Kratos and Bia, with their appropriate implements of brazen chains, hammers, nails and wedges, while Hephaistos, a kindred fire god, sympathises with Prometheus. The cause of the antagonism between Zeus and Prometheus is stated as the undue compassion of the latter for mortals, whereby he has awakened the Nemesis which, in Hellenic idea, perpetually waited on human progress and prosperity, especially when these were regarded as excessive. On the other hand, the inherent independence of Prometheus—here represented as the son of Themis, *i.e.*, of Right or Justice—is also admitted, and in the admission is implied the unjust tyranny of Zeus. The power of knowledge and foresight, in opposition even to the ministers of Zeus, is also recognised in the remark of Kratos that Prometheus will find a way even from the impracticable. Indicated also is the disinterested virtue of the suffering Titan—a conceivable outcome from the self-destroying attributes of fire. Not for himself, for his own aggrandisement or advantage, has he incurred the hatred of Zeus, but in order to benefit mortals, to impart to them a share of the blessings which, as he clearly intimates, Zeus has unjustly withholden from them. In this respect his imprisonment in a manless waste on a solitary crag far from sight or hearing of his human friends and *protégés* assumes a peculiar poignancy. Having offended his celestial relations, he is cut off from even the sympathies of his new terrestrial companions.¹

But if the introductory scene serves to exhibit the relation of Zeus to Prometheus, it does so chiefly from the standpoint of the former. Kratos is the faithful minister of the decrees of Olympus, the cruel executor of the harsh mandates of his sovereign, who treats the feeble deprecation of Hephaistos with contempt. But the next scene exhibits the relation from the standpoint of the Titan. Left alone on his bed of rock, with the insolent invectives of Kratos still ringing in his ears and writh-

¹ This is the most obvious, probably the only signification of the Titan's solitude—it was an aggravation of Zeus's cruelty; but Goethe has given it another meaning by making solitude the best condition for evolving (dramatically) the conception of Prometheus, and generally for all kinds of literary productivity. He tells us that when engaged in elaborating his own idea of Prometheus, he withdrew himself from the world. Compare *Wahrheit und Dichtung*, bk. xv.

ing with the new agony of manacles and fetters, pierced too by nails and wedges which are only not fatal because he is immortal, Prometheus by degrees recovers his power of speech. In a passage of great beauty he addresses himself to the more beneficent aspects of nature, in other words, those phases of it which bear most resemblance to his own philanthropic nature.

O god-like æther and ye swift-winged winds,
Ye founts of rivers and th' unnumbered smiles
Of ocean waves, thee too all-mother Earth,
And th' all-beholding circle of the sun,

On you I call !

Behold me what I suffer, being a god,

At th' hands of gods.

Ye see by what indignities devoured,
I must through countless ages agonise.

Bondage so base hath he who new commands

Th' immortal gods invented against me.

Alas ! the present and the coming woe

I must bemoan ;

Nor of these labours is there end decreed.

And yet, what am I saying ?

All future things by me are well foreknown,

And no ill can befall me unforeseen.

But it behoves

To bear the destined evil as one can,

Knowing stern fate's unconquerable might.

On these my woes

Nor silence nor yet speech is possible ;

For giving boons to men,

I, wretched being, am snaréd in these toils.

I sought for them the hidden fount of fire,

Borne in the hollow of a fennel rod,

Which has become the teacher of all arts

To mortals, and the source of all invention.

Vengeance like this I suffer for my crimes,

Spiked down in chains beneath the open sky.

But ah ! What sound is this ? What od'rous breath

Ineffable that steals to me, god-given ?

Or is it mortal, or of mingled sort ?

Comes some one to this rock remote to gaze

Upon my woes, or willing something else ?

Ye see me shackled, an ill-fated god,

The foe of Zeus, in sooth of all the gods,

As many as frequent the hall of Zeus,

Because of my great friendship for mankind.

Alas ! what rustling do I hear,
As of approaching birds ? The air
Soft whistles with the gentle whir of wings,
But every nearing thing new boding brings.

At this point the chorus enters. The daughters of Okeanos, whose gentle hovering has excited the suffering Titan's alarm, draw near to sympathise with his woes ; partly, too, in answer to his invocation of the humaner aspects of nature.

Chor. Fear not, for of wings a friendly flock
In rivalry swift draws nigh this rock,
Having hardly persuaded our father's mind,
And conveyed by swift-rushing surges of wind.
For the clang of smitten brass
Pierced our cave's recesses,
Startling far the modesty
That maidens' breasts possesses.
So in our winged chariots, its meaning to find,
We've come in such haste, we've left sandals behind.

Prom. Ah, ye of fruitful Tethys' breed,
And Father Okeanos's seed,
Who round the earth doth rushing go
For ever with unslumb'ring flow ;
Behold me carefully and see
In what bonds fastened grievously
I'm doom'd unenvied watch to keep
On the summits of this craggy steep.

Chor. I see Prometheus, and a fearful
Mist steals o'er my two eyes tearful
Seeing how thy frame on this rock doth pine
Helplessly bound in links adamantine,
For now in Olympus new pilots hold sway,
And with new laws Zeus rules in a lawless way,
While the mighty of old he fain would slay.

Prom. Would that in Hades—'neath the earth—
Or Tart'ros of unbounded girth,
Home of the dead where darkness reigns,
He'd placed me when in cruel chains
Impregnable he'd bound me,
That neither god nor mortal being
Should laugh when these my sorrows seeing.
But now the plaything of the wind
'Neath th' open sky am I confined
While foes may joy around me.

Chor. But who indeed of gods is he
Who could so iron-hearted be
As to find pleasure in power's abuse,
Who would not rather, excepting Zeus,
In thy agonies sympathise?
But he in his wrath and unbending mind
For ever oppresses th' immortal kind,
Nor will he cease their wills to bind
Until he has glutted his heart of stone,
Or that some one by stratagem seize his throne—
A not easily taken prize.

Prom. Myself in truth though in harsh chains
Outraged, shall he yet need who reigns
O'er gods, the new plot to declare
Which from his grasp will surely tear
Both throne and regal dignity.
But honeyed phrase will not bend me,
Nor cruel threat'nings crook my knee.
To him that secret I'll ne'er name
Till from these chains he'th set me free,
And made amends for this foul shame.

Chor. Thou indeed continuest bold,
Nor biting speech dost thou withhold,
And thy too free utterance scorn'st to bind
But piercing alarm assails my mind ;
For I dread as I muse on thy fate
What end of these suff'rings thou shalt find,
And when, whether early or late,
For Zeus hath a temper that cannot be reached,
And an iron heart that will not be beseeched.

Prom. That Zeus is harsh, I freely own,
Justice he keeps for himself alone ;
But still a time will come when he
Well softened in his mind shall be,
When crush'd by fate like him ye see ;
Composing then his ruthless rage,
He'll come (each willing) unto me
A league of friendship to engage.

Chor. Disclosing all thy tale, now tell to us
The crime for which Zeus having taken thee
Thus cruelly and basely thee entreats,
Instruct us if the story hurt thee not.

Hereupon follows the story of Prometheus, which, though partly interrupted by conversation with the chorus and by the arrival

of Okeanos, consists of a fairly consecutive narrative of his supposed relation, firstly, to his fellow-deities of Olympus; secondly, to the human race which he has befriended.

Even to speak of these things gives me pain,
While painful too is silence, and full grievous
When erst the gods began to cherish wrath
And 'gainst each other bitter feud upstirred,
Some wishing Chronos from his throne to hurl
That Zeus might thenceforth reign, while others sought
Conversely—Zeus might never rule the gods.
I thereupon the safest counsel urged
Upon the Titans—brood of heaven and earth—
Alas, without avail. For crafty schemes
Despising in their dauntless hearts, they deemed
That easily by force themselves would win.
But mother Themis more than once to me
(Called also Earth, of many names one form)
Disclosed the future, how it should befall
That neither by sheer strength nor brutal force
But sole by craft the victors should prevail.
These bodings, often urged by me in words,
They deemed unworthy of their least regard.
The best of thus remaining schemes then seemed
To take my mother and to side with Zeus,
The willing to the willing proff'ring aid,
And through my counsel is't that the abyss
Of murky Tart'ros ancient Chronos hides,
Together with his comrades. By this aid
The tyrant of the gods advantaged,
With these base tortures basely me requites,
For somehow to each tyranny pertains
This malady—suspicion of its friends.
But as regards your question, for what cause
He tortures me, this will I now explain.
No sooner mounted on his father's throne,
Than to the deities he proffer'd gifts,
To each his own, and organised his rule.
But heed of wretched mortals took he none,
Nay, rather wished t' exterminate the race.
This none of gods opposéd save myself,
But I dared do so. Mortals I thus freed
From fell destruction and from Hades' jaws,
For this am I by all these tortures cramp'd,
Grievous to bear and pitiful to see;
Compassionating mortals, I was deemed

Of pity's meed unworthy—ruthlessly
Am I thus crush'd. To Zeus ignoble sight.

Chor. Of iron heart and hewn of stone is he
Who in thy sorrows doth not sympathise.
I could have wished the sight I ne'er had seen,
And, having seen, I bear an anguished heart.

Prom. Truly to friends am I a piteous sight.

Chor. But did'st thou ne'er advance beyond those gifts?

Prom. Men's doom from mortal foresight I kept hid.

Chor. Applying what pharmacy to this disease?

Prom. I caused to dwell within them sightless hopes.

Chor. A great boon this, forsooth, thou gav'st to men.

Prom. Besides all these, I gifted them with fire.

Chor. Have then the day-lived beings the burning flame?

Prom. And by it many arts they well shall learn.

Chor. For crimes like these then Zeus inflicts on thee
His torture, nor the least abatement grants.
But doth no term of suff'ring meet thy view?

Prom. None other but the seeming good to him.

Chor. How can this seem? what hope of such event?
See'st not how thou hast err'd? and this to urge
Yields me no pleasure, and to thee gives pain.
But truce to talk, seek freedom from thy woe.

Prom. 'Tis easy for the man whose foot is plac'd
Outside calamities, to urge advice
On him who struggles in their toils. But all
These things I knew, it cannot be denied
I err'd most willingly. On men a boon
Bestowing, I wrought sorrows for myself.
But still I ne'er gave heed that in such pains
I needs must fret away on lofty rocks,
Chancing upon this bare and lonely crag.

A new personage now appears on the stage. Okeanos, the father of the chorus, arrives on his winged steed and joins his daughters, both in their sympathy with the suffering Titan and in their efforts to induce him to submit to the indomitable will of Zeus. It may be parenthetically remarked that all the interlocutors of the Titan seem intended by the dramatist to exemplify (1) his sublime self-confidence in the justice of his cause; (2) his invincible detestation of the cruelty, injustice and unscrupulous conduct of Zeus. The function of Okeanos and his

daughters is not unlike that of Job's friends when they endeavour to produce an impossible and unveracious conviction of transgression. There is, however, a peculiar inconsequence in the admonitions of the Titan's friends, in that they agree with him as to the injustice of those decrees to which they nevertheless exhort him to submit.

Oke. Of a long journey have I reached the bound,
And thee for whom I travers'd it have found ;
My winged steed, by will and not by bit,
Well guiding. And be well assured of it,
Prometheus, that I sorrow with thy woes.
Such sympathy the ties of kin impose ;
And kin apart,
None else like thee so largely shares my heart ;
Take thou these words as true, not vain
Tongue-kindness, which I most disdain.
Come tell me then how thou must aided be,
For never shalt thou say than Okeanos
Thou hast a friend more faithful unto thee.

Prom. Ha ! what then means this ? Thou, too, art here,
A gazer on my woes. How hast thou dared,
Quitting thy co-named stream and ocean caves,
Rock-roofed and self-exhumed, hither to come
To th' iron-bearing land ? Is it that thou
My sufferings mayst not only contemplate
But sorrow o'er ? Behold a sight ; see me,
The friend of Zeus, who in his regal seat
Contributed to stablish him, and now
In such great tortures I am by him crush'd.

Oke. I see, Prometheus, and I fain to thee,
Though thou art subtle, would best counsel urge :
Know then thyself and fit thee to new ways,
For a new ruler reigns among the gods.
But if thus sharp and keen-edged words thou hurl'st,
Mayhap will Zeus, though seated far aloft,
In such wise hear thee that this present grief
Will seem to thee a childish mock of woe.
Rather, O wretched ! cease these passions fierce,
And from these tortures seek deliverance.
Stale saws, mayhap, I seem to thee to vent,
But such disasters happen as the fruit
Of a too froward tongue. For not as yet
Art humble nor resign'st thyself to ills,
Nay, to thy present evils would'st add more.

But never, taking me at least as guide,
 Wilt thou fling out thy leg against the pricks,
 Seeing that a monarch harsh unbending rules.
 —And now, indeed, I go, and will attempt
 To free thee if I can from these thy pains,
 And be thou quiet nor persist in railing.
 What, know'st not surely, being so very wise,
 That punishment awaits a forward tongue ?

Prom. I give thee joy that blameless still thou art,
 Though sharing in and daring with my plans ;
 But now let be, nor care thyself for me,
 Thou'lt ne'er persuade Zeus, he's inflexible,
 Rather take heed, lest ill befall thy way.

Oke. Much better fitted art thou to advise
 Thy neighbour than thyself, if one might guess,
 Not from thy speech, but fate. Yet think not thou
 To thwart my plan. Assured I feel that Zeus
 Will grant this boon, and free thee from thy woes.

Prom. The offer's kindly meant, I'll ne'er deny,
 For in respect of zeal thou lackest nought,
 Yet trouble not thyself, for still in vain
 And profitless to me thou labourest,
 Whate'er thy labour be. Rather be still,
 Keep out of harm ; for though unfortunate
 Myself, I would not wish on that account
 To hurt as many others as I could :
 By no means, since my brother Atlas' griefs
 Oppress my heart, who in Hesperian climes
 Supports the pillar of the heaven and earth,
 Poising the load his hands refuse to grasp
 Upon his shoulders. Pitying, too, I saw
 The earth-born inmate of Kilikian caves,
 That monster dire, the raging hundred-headed
 Tuphon borne down by might, who 'gainst the gods
 Arose, death hissing from his horrid jaws,
 While from his eyes flash'd forth a hideous glare,
 As if the throne of Zeus he'd fain uproot
 By force, but on him came Zeus's sleepless dart,
 The thunderbolt, flame-breathing, downward fell,
 Which striking scar'd him from his lofty boasts,
 For, smitten to life's source, he was burnt up,
 And lightning-blasted in his strength ; and now
 A helpless and wide sprawling corse he lies
 Hard by a narrow strait, and press'd down
 'Neath Etna's roots ; while on its topmost heights
 Hephaistos seated forges red-hot bolts,

Whence some time shall burst forth fell streams of fire,
Wasting with cruel jaws the level fields
Of fruit-abounding Sicily. Such rage
Shall Tuphon boil forth in a storm of darts
Red hot, unceasing, breathing flame, although
By Zeus's thunder he be cinerised.
—For thee, thou art no novice, nor hast need
I teach thee, save thyself as thou know'st best,
I will bear out my present destiny,
Until the mind of Zeus cease from its rage.

Oke. Know'st thou not this, Prometheus, that sound words
Are the physicians of a rage diseased?

Prom. True, if opportunely one soothe down the heart,
And not by force repress the timid soul.

Oke. In foresight with audacity combined
What danger dost thou see? Instruct thou me.

Prom. Superfluous toil and vacuous vanity.

Oke. Well, let me sicken with this same complaint,
For to be wise, not seeming so, is best.

Prom. This fault of thine seems close akin to mine.

Oke. Thy speech is clearly meant to send me home.

Prom. I fear lest pitying me thou harm thyself.

Oke. With the new-seated on th' all-ruling throne?

Prom. Take heed of him, lest angered be his heart.

Oke. Thy fate, Prometheus, is my monitor.

Prom. Be off, depart, preserve thy present mind.

Oke. On me now starting hast thou urged this word.

* * * * *

After the departure of Okeanos, the Titan lapses into silence, broken, however, presently by the chorus, who bewail the fate he has encountered through the self-imposed laws of Zeus, and dwell upon the general sympathy his lot has called forth. Prometheus after a time rouses himself, and proceeds with his narrative of the blessings he has secured for men. The story might be termed the first extant history of civilisation.

Prom. Think not my silence due to arrogance
Or pride; reflection 'tis that gnaws my heart.
Myself thus seeing—treated with such baseness,
For to these self-same new made deities
Who else but I their honours well defined?
—But on these points I'm silent, for I speak
To you who know. As to the ills of men,

Give ear how those who heretofore were babes,
 I rendered wise and sharing intellect.
 Not wishing to disclaim mankind, I'll tell
 At length the kind intention of my gifts.
 They first, indeed, though seeing, saw in vain,
 Though hearing, still were deaf, and for long time,
 Like to the shapes of dreams, all objects mixed
 Confusedly, and nothing did they know
 Of houses, brick built, sun exposed, nor yet
 Of woodwork ; but, like insects light as air,
 They dwell in exhumed holes, in sunless depths
 Of caves. Nor had they any sign assured
 Of winter, nor of flowery spring, nor summer
 Rich in fruit ; but everything they wrought
 Was void of plan, until I show'd to them
 When stars arose, and, harder to be known,
 Their setting. Next and most I found for them
 The number, science chief of human arts ;
 How letters are conjointly placed in words,
 And mem'ry's art, the mother muse of all.
 I too first bound in yokes the beasts once wild,
 Now servile to the collar and the load
 Of human bodies, whence they might become
 Aids in their greatest labours to mankind.
 'Neath chariots also, tractable to reins,
 I brought the steeds, the crown of wealthy pride.
 None else than I the chariots linen-winged
 Of sailors first devised that roam the sea.
 Such arts mechanic finding out for man,
 Unlucky wretch ! I can find no device
 By which to free me from my present woe.

Chor. Evil outrageous hast thou borne, going wrong
 By erring judgment, and, like some unskilled
 Physician, being diseased, thou dost despair
 Of finding drugs adapted to thy cure.

Prom. When you have heard the remnant of my tale,
 You'll wonder more what arts and ways I found.
 Chiefest, indeed, when any man fell ill,
 There was no remedy, no solid drug,
 Nor salve, nor draught, but, lacking medicines,
 Men were reduced to skeletons, until
 I show'd them compounds of mild remedies,
 By which they guard them from all maladies.
 The many forms of magic I arranged.
 I first marked out 'mong dreams those destinéd
 To waking issue. I made known to men
 Sounds ominous and hard to be discerned.

The chance-met, wayside tokens and the flight
Of crooked talon'd birds I clear defined.
The lucky and unlucky, too, I mark'd,
The mode of life of each, and with the rest
Its enmities and loves and intercourse ;
The smoothness of intestines, and what hue
Possessing, would give pleasure to the gods,
The lucky streaks of the gall-bladder's lobe,
And fat-envelop'd limbs. And having roast
The long chine—to an art hard to be found
I guided mortals—and the fiery signs,
Unlearn'd hitherto, I now made clear.
Such were these gifts, and underneath the earth
What benefits were hidden unto men,
As brass and iron, silver, gold. Who's he
Would claim to be their finder before me ?
No man who idly does not wish to vaunt,
And, in short phrase, learn all my tale in brief,
All arts arrive to men from Prometheus.

Chor. Now, profit not thou mortals more than right,
Nor be regardless of thy luckless self ;
I have good hope that from these chains set free,
Thou yet shalt be not less in power than Zeus.

Prom. Not so are those things order'd by Fate,
Who all things consummates. But bow'd down
By countless grievous woes, I thus escape
My chains, and art is weaker far than fate.¹

¹ As one of the profounder utterances of the *Prometheus V.* these words deserve especial attention. In the original they are as follows :—

οὐ ταῦτα ταύτῃ μοῖρά πω τελεσφόρος
κρᾶναι πέπρωται · μυρίαὶ δὲ πημοναῖς,
δύαις τε καμφθεῖς, ὧδε δεσμὰ φυγγάνω
τέχνη δ' ἀνάγκης ἀσθενεστέρα μακρῶ.

The passage may be held to express two truths. 1. That Prometheus's sufferings are decreed by fate. 2. That while he has to "dree his weird" by persistent suffering, the continued struggle may be regarded as the sole alleviation of that suffering. The same thought of the essential persistency of truth-search, or the connection of suffering with knowledge, has found expression in other writers. Thus Goethe's Faust finds his salvation in continued struggle.

"Wer immer strebend sich bemüht
Den können wir erlösen,"

say the angels who finally effect his deliverance.

Compare also Shelley :—

Chor. Who then is pilot of Necessity?

Prom. The Triform Fates and mindful Erinnys.

Chor. Is Zeus inferior then in power to these?

Prom. In no way can he 'scape his fated lot.

Chor. What can be Zeus's fate but aye to reign?

Prom. Ah! this you may not learn, nor seek to know.

Chor. Some sacred thing no doubt 'tis that thou veil'st.

Prom. Of something else discourse. By no means yet
Must this be told. It rather veiled must be
With greatest closeness, for in keeping this
I free me from my shameful chains and woes.

Here the Titan again relapses into his normal state of gloomy speechlessness, and the chorus exercises its function of once more reviewing the situation. While pitying and admiring Prome-

“To forgive woes which hope thinks infinite,
To forgive wrongs darker than death or night,
To defy power which seems omnipotent,
To love and bear; *to hope till Hope creates
From its own wreck the thing it contemplates;*
Neither to change, nor flatter, nor repent,
This, like thy glory, Titan, is to be,
Good, great, and joyous, beautiful and free”.

Byron has the same thought. Speaking of the Titan, he makes Manfred say:—

“Thou art a symbol and a sign
To mortals of their fate and force,
Like thee man is in part divine,
A troubled stream from a pure source,
And man in portions can foresee
His own funereal destiny,
His wretchedness and his resistance,
And his sad unallied existence,
To which his spirit may oppose
Itself—an equal to all woes,
And a firm will and a deep sense,
*Which even in torture can descry,
Its own concentrated recompense,*
Triumphant when it dares defy,
And making death a victory”.

Another passage in which Aeschylus connects suffering and knowledge in the relation of cause and effect is in the *Agam.*, 170, τὸν πάθη μάθος θέντα κυρίως ἔχειν, whence see Paley's note.

theus, they manifest the customary Hellenic dread of irreverence for the gods. They also declare their preference for the joyous aspects of existence, rather than for that terribly earnest conception of it which they cannot help discerning pertained to Prometheus. They are, moreover, doubtful whether the combined gift of fire and foresight to humanity was worth the direful consequences entailed by it. They place knowledge in its most mournful collocation—with the shortness of human life. Under the circumstances, they are almost inclined to side with Zeus against Prometheus. For the time at least, they share the feeling already set forth by Okeanos—its accredited exponent in the drama—of mingled remonstrance for his boldness with compassion for his sorrows.

Chor. Never may Zeus, who all doth sway,
Against my purpose his might array,
Nor in serving the gods may I be nice
At their sacred feasts, when in sacrifice
The oxen fall at the knife's fell gleam
By Father Okean's unresting stream,
Nor in words may I stray,
But by me alway
May this feeling be cherished,
Nor e'er fade away :—
Sweet is long life when with hopes bravely dight,
Up-buoying the soul with mirth ever bright.
—But I shudder thee beholding,
Whom countless woes are now enfolding.
 For regardless of Zeus,
 In self-will, Prometheus,
Thou honourest mortals more than just,
 But how bootless thy grace
 Acknowledge thou must,
 For from whence to man's race
 Can real aid find place ?
What advantage, my friend, to beings can accrue,
Whose span of life every day makes new ?
In what impotence weak, dost not see aright ?
(Like forms that delude us in dreams of the night)
Are involved those mortals ungifted of sight.
Ah ! never shall schemes of men though great,
The order harmonious of Zeus violate,
So teaches, Prometheus, thy deadly fate.

Hereupon follows, after a passing allusion to his marriage—in all probability a late addition to the original myth—the

episode of Io. As, however, this has only an indirect bearing on the main plot of the drama, it may be fittingly passed over with a few cursory observations.

The connection of the hapless hornet-driven maid with Prometheus is twofold. First, as a common victim she shares with the Titan in the arbitrary tyranny and cruelty of Zeus. Second, she is the ancestress of the hero who is fated to be his deliverer. In the first relation, the narrative of Io undoubtedly adds to the culpable aspect in which the dramatist presents the conduct of Zeus to Prometheus. It reveals the supreme ruler of Olympus not only as the jealous oppressor of intellectual wisdom and human progress, but as the cruel violator of maiden modesty and virtue. No doubt there is nothing strange in the latter presentation. It was the character of Zeus most prevalent in Hellenic mythology. But it is observable that, as related by Aeschylus, the story of Io is set forth with a purposeful accentuation of its harsher features, and in a manner calculated to enlist the sympathies of the hearers. Many commentators have striven to show that the general design of the poet was not to lessen the popular feeling of veneration which, however begotten or sustained, the Greeks entertained for Zeus.¹ Such an hypothesis is far from being confirmed by his mode of treating the story of Io. Taken by themselves, the sufferings of Prometheus might have been plausibly attributed to his own self-will, to his resistance against immutable law. There was more than one standpoint from which the tortures of the Titan might have been regarded as in part self-inflicted, and the conduct of Zeus as not

¹ Compare on this view of the question Professor Blackie's able paper in the *Classical Museum*, vol. v., p. 1. On the other hand, Welcker has clearly shown what is indeed self-evident, both from the *Prometheus* and his remaining dramatic works, that Aeschylus does not believe in the gods of the popular mythology, and has no objection to point out the degrading and immoral effects of such a belief. Like Prodikos, Perikles, Sokrates, etc., he uses the customary names of the divinities of Olympus, but invests them with new and higher significance. Zeus, for example, is to him a name for the ruling powers of nature.

"Zeus is the earth and air, and Zeus the heavens,
Yea, Zeus is all, and what is over all."

Compare on the poet's theological standpoint in the *Prometheus*, Welcker, *Aesch. Tril.*, pp. 110, 111; and *Griech. Götterlehre*.

absolutely incapable of exoneration. But the disastrous lot of Io had no such palliating circumstances. Nor is the supreme agency of Fate here obstructed as in the legend of Oidipous and other well-known Hellenic myths. The sole instigator and mover in the plot is Zeus himself and his lustful volition. Those who are unwilling to suppose that a certain measure of disdain for the supreme deity of the popular belief was intended by the poet as an outcome of his drama might be asked to realise—and that from the Hellenic standpoint—the effect which a chained and tortured Prometheus and a horned and crazy Io appearing together on the stage would be likely to have on the audience. Nor, indeed, are we left to our imaginations in the matter. The poet makes Io reciprocate the joy of Prometheus at the prospect of the final overthrow of their common oppressor in such a manner as to disclose the sensibilities of his hearers, which he would fain awaken; while a still greater measure of sympathy with the sufferings of Io is clearly sought to be aroused by the expressions of horror and repugnance with which the chorus listens to her story. However much the idea may conflict with the religiousness of the Hellenes, or with the reverential tone of the poet in speaking elsewhere of the deities of Olympus, it is inconceivable that he should have put such sentiments in the mouths of his characters if his object had not been to question and detract from the veneration customarily bestowed upon Zeus.

The second relation of Io to Prometheus as the ancestress of Herakles is only incidentally dwelt upon in the *Prometheus Vincetus*. Probably it occupied a more prominent position in the third part of the Trilogy—"Prometheus Unbound"—though, as Welcker has pointed out, the manner of the Titan's deliverance and the mode in which Herakles was to contribute to it were points on which the different parts of the Trilogy were by no means consistent. Perhaps, indeed, it would not be incorrect to say that the Titan seems as a rule to lay more stress on his oppressor's overthrow than on his own deliverance, albeit he certainly regards the two events as having a close relation to each other. After the departure of Io, who rushes off with crazy shrieks calculated still further to excite the sympathies of the audience and their indignation against her oppressor, Prometheus addresses the chorus on this point.

Yet in truth will Zeus, maugre his proud mind,
 Be humble—such a match he means to make
 As from his throne and rule shall hurl him forth
 A castaway. Then shall he well fulfilled
 His father Chronos' curse, which he invoked
 When from his ancient throne he was deposed.
 Deliv'rance from these ills, none of the gods
 Except myself could clearly show to him ;
 These things I know, and how they might be warded,
 In his bravado then let him rest on,
 Confiding in his aerial noise, and brandishing
 The fire-breathing thunder in his hands,
 For nought shall these avail to thwart his fall,
 Dishonoured, unto things not to be borne.
 Such an antagonist is Zeus preparing,
 Omen invincible ! against himself.
 Who truly flame more potent than the lightning
 Shall find out, and louder din than thunder.
 Poseidon's spear shall he to pieces break.
 Encount'ring with this ill Zeus then shall learn
 The difference 'twixt ruler and 'twixt slave.

The chorus here attempts once more to appease the irritated Titan, but with the usual effect of increasing his indignation and the vehemence of his objurgation.

Chor. Thou threat'nest against Zeus what thou desir'st.

Prom. What will befall, besides being what I wish.

Chor. Must we expect some one will o'erthrow Zeus ?

Prom. Aye, and that he'll suffer greater pains than these.

Chor. How dost not trouble belching forth such words ?

Prom. What should I fear for whom death is undoomed ?

Chor. But Zeus may send thee woe far worse than this.

Prom. Let him then do so. All's foreseen by me.

Chor. Who worship Adrasteia are the wise.

Prom. Well, worship, kneel, and cringe to him who rules ;

For me, I care for Zeus e'en less than nought,

So let him do, and lord it his brief time

Just as he lists, for long he shall not rule

The deities. But soft ! for I discern

Approaching near the errand boy of Zeus—

—The servant of the tyrant, newly crowned,

No doubt he's come announcing some new thing.

The ensuing colloquy of Prometheus with Hermes may be said to form the most dramatic portion of the tragedy. As in

the commencing so in the final act of the drama, Prometheus comes into direct collision with the messengers of Zeus. There is, however, a subtle though befitting contrast between his behaviour when insulted by Kratos and his conduct when taken to task by Hermes. The insolence of the former as the representation of brute irresistible force he does not deign to answer, whereas to Hermes, who tries to persuade him of his inferiority to Zeus, he replies with readiness and vigour. The latter encounter serves also to reveal the indomitable firmness of the Titan's mind, and the fearless audacity not unmixed with disdain with which he contemplates Zeus and the deities of Olympus. The interview forms a fitting prelude to the final scene of the drama wherein Zeus employs all his power to crush his invincible adversary.

Enter HERMES.

Thee, the subtle one, surcharged with bitterness,
Who sinned'st 'gainst the gods, bestowing gifts
On day-lived beings—the fire thief—I address.
The sire bids thee unfold what match that is
Thou vauntest, whereby he must fall from power.
And these things, too, no way mysteriously,
But in exactest detail set those forth—
Nor cause thou me two journeys. Prometheus,
Thou see'st that by such acts Zeus is not soothed.

Prom. Mouthed loftily at least and full of pride,
Thy speech, as of a messenger of gods
Being young, ye lord it youthfully and think
Ye dwell in palaces impregnable
To sorrow. Yet from these have I not seen
Two kings cast forth? and I shall see the third,
Who sways it now, deposed with equal shame
And speed. Seem I to thee in aught
Submissive, trembling to the new-made gods?
Much, nay, altogether, do I lack such awe.
For thee, do thou again pursue the path
That brought thee here, for thou shalt never learn
Ought of the matters that thou seek'st of me.

Herm. By such stiff-neckedness did'st thou of yore
Harbour thy ship in these calamities.

Prom. For thy base thralldom, heed thou it full well,
I would not barter my unhappy lot;
Since I deem better slav'ry to this rock
Than to be trusted messenger to Zeus.
Thus meet it is reviler to revile.

Herm. Thou seem'st to glory in thy present state.

Prom. Glory ? glorying thus I fain would see
Mine enemies, among whom I count thee.

Herm. What, blamest thou me too for thy ill fate ?

Prom. In simple phrase, I detest all the gods ;
As many as by me advantagéd
Do thus unjustly, cruelly me requite.

Herm. I hear thee raving with no slight disease.

Prom. Diseased I am, if hate of foes be so.

Herm. Unbearable wert thou if prosperous.

Prom. Alas !

Herm. That plaintive utt'rance knows not Zeus.

Prom. But Time becoming old doth all things teach.

Herm. Thou truly not as yet hast wisdom learnt.

Prom. Else had I not address'd thee, being a slave.

Herm. Nought then thou'lt tell of what the Father seeks ?

Prom. Being so obliged, I would return his kindness.

Herm. Thou floutest me as though I were a boy.

Prom. Art thou not a boy, and yet more foolish,
If thou expectest to learn aught from me ?
There is no outrage nor device by which
Zeus shall compel me to disclose those things,
Before my tort'ring fetters shall be loosed.
Hence let his flaming lightning be shot forth
And with the white winged snow and thunder-claps
Beneath the ground commingle, trembling all things,
For none of these shall move me to declare
By whom 'tis doomed to hurl him from his power.

Herm. Bethink thee now if this course seems availing.

Prom. Long since has this been thought of and resolved.

Herm. Dare thou, O foolish one, dare now at length
For these thy present ills to think aright.

Prom. As vainly dost thou urge me with thy pleas
As thou might'st thwart the ocean wave, for ne'er
Occur to thee the thought that, sorely dreading
Zeus's wrath, I shall become effeminate,
And shall beseech him whom I greatly loathe,
With womanish upliftings of my hands,
To loose me from these chains. I'm far from that.

Herm. Though speaking much, I seem to talk in vain,
For nowise touched or softened is thy heart
By prayers. But champing as a new-yoked colt
The bit, thou warr'st and fightest with the reins,

And yet on reason impotent thy rage is based,
Because self-will in one not rightly minded
Doth of itself avail e'en less than nought.
Mark too, if unpersuaded by my words,
What tempest and a third-wave surge of ills
Shall strike thee, unescapable. For first,
With thunder-bolt and blazing lightning-flash,
The Sire will rive apart this rugged cliff,
And overwhelm thy body,
An angle-ledge of rock buoying up thy frame.
Then after ending a long space of time,
Thou shalt return to light, and a wing'd hound
Of Zeus—an eagle thirsting blood, shall tear
Voraciously thy huge and mangled frame.
Upon thee creeping daily, like a guest
Unasked, and on the black food of thy liver
Shall feast its fill. Nor yet do those expect
The term of such a woe until some god
As substitute of these thy pains appear,
Who willingly shall go to sinless Hades
And to th' abysses dark round Tartaros.
Hence take thou heed. No feigned threat is this,
But earnestly avouched ; for lying words
The mouth of Zeus knows not, but every word
Is act. Take heed then and be wise, nor rank
In any case self-will above good counsel.

It deserves here to be remarked that the chorus is for the moment carried away by the combined influence of the high station and fervent appeal of the messenger of Zeus, together with the pathetic spectacle of the Titan's misery. Accordingly, it joins with Hermes in urging Prometheus to give way, but with the result of disclosing more forcibly the stern self-dependence of Prometheus and the utter impossibility of any reconciliation between himself and Zeus that depended on his own submission.

Chor. To us indeed seems Hermes to advise
Things opportune : for thee he recommends
Thy self-will yielding to pursue wise counsel,
Be persuaded ! To the wise 'tis base to err.

Prom. On me who know hath this slave urged his errand ;
But for a foe to suffer ill by foes
Is nothing base. Hence let the fiery wreath
Of lightning doubly edged be hurl'd on me,

And vexed be æther by the thunder-claps
 And paroxysms of fierce winds.
 Earth from her basements let the storm-wind rock,
 Aye, from her very roots,
 Let th' ocean waves and paths of heavenly stars
 In violent surge commingle mutually,
 Let Zeus my body cast, with whirling fling,
 By Fate's stern eddies into murky Tart'ros—
 At least he cannot visit me with death.

Herm. Resolves and words like these one may in truth
 From maniacs hear. What lacks indeed of madness
 His own lot? How falls it short of raving?
 But ye who sympathise with this man's woe,
 Depart ye elsewhere quickly from this spot,
 Lest the harsh roaring of the thunder-clap
 Should smite your minds with frenzy.

This advice of Hermes to the chorus was probably based on the counsel of the latter to Prometheus to yield to Zeus. If so, the messenger of Olympus entirely misconceived the direction and strength of the sympathies of the chorus. However much it might regret the Titan's obstinacy, it was by no means prepared to forsake him in the coming struggle with Zeus. Hence it meets the counsel of Hermes with indignation and disdain.

Chor. Speak and enjoin to me some matter else
 In which thou may'st prevail: for now at least
 Thou hast obtruded on me this advice
 Not to be borne.
 What! dost thou bid me practise villainy?
 With this man will I suffer what's decreed,
 For traitors have I learn'd to hold in hate,
 Nor is there sin that more excites my loathing.

Herm. Remember then the things that I forewarn,
 And do not when in Atê's net caught fast
 On fortune throw the blame. Nor ever say
 That Zeus in sorrow unforeseen hath cast you.
 By no means. Since ye bring it on yourselves,
 For knowing and not sudden nor in secret
 Will you be taken by your want of sense
 In Atê's net, from whence is no escape.

With these words of warning Hermes returns to Olympus to announce the bootless result of his mission; and the drama concludes with a vivid description of Zeus's efforts to subdue the indomitable Titan, or at least to exact vengeance for his refusal

to disclose his own future. The terrible convulsions that follow—precursors of the severer sufferings foretold by Hermes—are described by Prometheus himself, though they cannot induce any feeling of fear or regret, or extort any cry except a final appeal to the sun and mother earth to behold his sufferings.

And sooth to say in deed nor more in word

Upheaves the earth.

The raucous noise of thunder bellows by us,
Forth gleams the ruddy lightning in forked flashes,

Fierce hurricanes in eddies whirl the dust,

Loud blasts of all the winds are darting forth,

Each against each, a war of conflict gusts,

Commingled is the æther with the sea.

Such the attack that clearly comes from Zeus,

And meant to fright me.

O majesty revered of Mother Earth,

O æther that the common light of all

Revolv'st around,

Ye see what wrongs I suffer !

We are now in a position to estimate the final stage of the Promethean or fire myth. Generally this might be termed metaphysical, and we might regard it as comprehending the secondary meanings which in process of time, and by the exercise of metaphor and analogical reasoning, were evolved from the more primary and obvious uses of fire and light. These may be fitly considered under the sub-divisions—rational, naturalistic, ethical and social.

I. The first heading introduces us at once to the especial theme of the *Prometheus Vincetus*; in other words, the relation of the physical elements fire and light to their intellectual and other analogues—the relation of sensuous to mental perception—the analogy subsisting between sun, star and terrestrial fire on the one hand and human reason, intellectual vision and enlightenment on the other. That this relation should have been not only discovered but elaborated at so early a stage in the history of humanity is certainly a very remarkable fact, but it is sufficiently attested by philology no less than by mythology, as our investigations have sufficiently proved. It is impossible, however, to determine even approximately the time which such a stride in the intellectual evolution of humanity must have taken.

Judging by analogous transitions in ascertained history, from physical facts to their mental and spiritual correlations, it cannot have been less than many centuries. The fire myth was already beginning to lose its more markedly physical features when Aeschylus wrote his Trilogy. No doubt the first division of the tripartite drama dealt with the discovery of fire at some considerable length, but the metaphysical and rationalistic standpoint of the *Vinctus* justifies us in concluding that it was the analogical applications of the myth that possessed most attraction for the philosophical poet. What especially engaged his attention was not so much the primary qualities of fire as its diversified developments and uses—the transmutation, for example, of the physical element into the rudiments of civilisation and culture—the progress in human evolution of physical light into intellectual wisdom—the transformation of cave-dwellers, ignorant of speech and number, into rational and thinking beings—the transfiguration of wretched bipeds, doomed by Zeus to destruction, to co-equality by possession of the self-same gifts with the divinities of Olympus themselves.

With this as the *motif* of his drama, Aeschylus naturally insists on the advantages of knowledge regarded as a human possession. In the description and elaboration of these advantages the parallelism between physical and intellectual fire and light was soon found to be capable of considerable extension. The properties of the physical elements were seen to pertain to their metaphysical analogues. No doubt the first general estimate formed of fire by those who at the earliest period discovered and employed it was unconditionally favourable. Man was ready to pronounce on his new acquisition the verdict of the Hebrew Jahve on his creation of light. It was altogether very good. This also, as above observed, is the general verdict of the *Prometheus Vinctus*. Indeed, it constitutes the chief justification of the theft on the part of the Titan, and is conceded as fully by his enemies as it is claimed by himself. “The gleam of fire whence spring all arts” is the description given to it by Kratos, who also terms it “the honours of the gods”. Prometheus himself seems scarce able to do justice to the many excellencies of fire, both in its physical and metaphysical implications. In the former sense it has taught men the rudiments

of civilisation, in the latter it has instructed them in the operations of thought and language, while in general terms he describes it as "the teacher of all arts and source of all invention". It was just this unqualified appreciation of fire, with its accompaniment of light, as a human possession signified by such a verdict as "all arts to mortals from Prometheus come" that aroused the ire of the Olympian deities. As we shall see further on, the Titan refused to place any limit on the intellectual advance of mortals other than those inherent in the inevitable circumstances of the case, though he might and did regard the task of communicating knowledge as attended by suffering for those who were engaged in it.

But beneath this conception of the advantage of knowledge, which forms the general theme of the *Prometheus Vincetus*, there is discernible the still profounder idea of its drawbacks. Here also the parallel of fire, light, etc., might conceivably have offered suggestions. With all its manifold services to man, fire is a dangerous and destructive element. If it warms the dwellings of men and dresses their food it may also devour both their houses and themselves. Volcanic eruptions, though lighting up the firmament with a blaze of splendour, not unfrequently carry destruction in their train. The bolt of heaven with its momentary illumination as it seems to fall to earth not unfrequently slays men and demolishes the fruit of their labours. Animal heat, the mark and test of life, may become excessive and develop into the burning anguish of some deadly fever. Nor is light free from the mischiefs of excess. Too much light may blind the beholder and thereby manifest the same results as total darkness. The visual organs of terrestrial beings are only capable of receiving a certain quantity of light, and of exercising their powers of vision only within a certain limit. Similarly, knowledge and enlightenment may attain a stage of excess; at least they may become dogmatic and intolerant or too self-confident and presumptuous. In this stage of self-assertion, knowledge may array itself not only against tyranny and injustice but also against the inevitable laws of the universe. In any case, the enlightenment of finite beings—e.g., man—must needs be imperfect. Not only is it bounded by the range of human faculties, but by the duration of human life. No doubt this is

not the standpoint of Prometheus himself; it is rather that of his enemies, the Olympian deities. Their persistent reproach against the Titan is that he has given the honours of the immortals to the beings of a day. The chorus itself appears to regard this objection to the Promethean view as justified. What lasting profit, they seem to ask, can result from the gift of knowledge to creatures of an hour? The objection is one that has often found utterance in skeptical and pessimistic estimates of knowledge—not the least outspoken being that contained in the Hebrew Koheleth (Ecclesiastes). But although Prometheus does not share the depreciation of knowledge in itself, either for this or any other reason, he seems occasionally to regard his lot as significant of the fate which ordinarily befalls the dispenser of knowledge. Few lines in the *Prometheus* are more pregnant with meaning than those in which the Titan repudiates the hope of the chorus that eventually he shall be free and be equal in power to Zeus:—

Not so are those things orderéd by Fate
Who all things consummates. But bowéd down
By countless grievous woes I *thus* escape
My chains; and art is weaker far than fate.

And a similar obligation of suffering is suggested by Hermes when he declares that Prometheus cannot be freed until another god-like substitute can be found willing to undertake his destiny.¹ Now it is a remarkable fact that this conception of the drawbacks and even positive ills of human knowledge was widely prevalent at a very early period in the history of humanity and was occasionally the theme of mythological fancy. How far this dual character of knowledge, reason, enlightenment, which forms the root-thought of the cynical jibe of Mephistopheles—

Er nennt's Vernunft und braucht's allein,
Nur thierischer als jedes Thier zu seyn—

and similar sarcasms, was suggested by the twofold qualities of fire and light it is not easy to determine. It seems not improbable that while the analogy between physical and mental light

¹ According to Apollodoros, this substitute for Prometheus was Cheiron, the wisest of the centaurs. See on the point, Welcker, *Epischer Cylus*, ii., p. 415; *Griech. Götterlehre*, vol. ii., p. 265.

was detected at an early period, the mixed qualities of the latter had even previously been the result of independent observation. At any rate, we find this dual conception of knowledge in the older Hellenic, the Semitic and the Scandinavian mythologies. In the earliest religious thought of Greece no feature is more marked or more painful than the jealous malignancy with which the immortals are represented as regarding the progress and enlightenment of humanity. Thus the great teachers and benefactors of mankind, whose history is recounted in ancient mythology—such personages, *e.g.*, as Orpheus, Homer, etc.—are represented as blind or suffering from some other calamity which marks them as victims of the divine Nemesis. The position of the *Prometheus Vincetus* is noteworthy in this relation, because while it connects the dissemination of knowledge with suffering, it is also a vigorous and immortal protest against the misanthropy of the Olympian deities. We may, I think, take it as the first determined protest in the religious history of Greece against a dominant and over-bearing theology—against a view of deity which is immoral, arbitrary and utterly destructive of all human independence of thought and volition. Still more striking is the conviction of the dual and conflicting attributes of knowledge which we find in old Semitic records—*e.g.*, the narrative of the Fall in Genesis. Here Satan—who is identified in later Hebrew mythology with Azazel, the chief of the rebellious heaven-watchers—is admitted to have rendered the fallen Adam and Eve like gods by means of their knowledge of good and evil, though the advance was purchased at the cost of certain physical penalties. Similarly, the influence of Loki, the Teutonic god of light, is represented as of a mingled character. To quote Mr. Thorpe—who points out that the same conflicting attributes pertain to all the chief deities of the old Scandinavian mythology—“Nor is Loki the god of fire alone, but is also the origin of all evil and the father of lies”.¹ I need not point out the connection of these ideas with the open Dualism or Manichæanism of some Oriental creeds.

II. A new class of implications meets us when we directly connect the story of Prometheus with natural phenomena. How

¹ Comp. Thorpe, *North. Myth.*, vol. i., p. 203; and Grimm, *D. M.*, p. 225.

legitimate such a connection is need not here be insisted on. However metaphysical the secondary meanings of the myth, its primary significations were as we have seen naturalistic. Zeus himself is the personified firmament: Prometheus, besides being earth-born, personified fire, partly celestial, partly terrestrial. Their conflict is frequently described as a war between the elements. Now the first thing to be remarked in this Nature exposition of Prometheus is the dissonance manifested in the wills of the rival divinities. Zeus desires one thing, Prometheus another. Zeus wishes to extirpate the human race, Prometheus to preserve and elevate it. Zeus wishes to share the Titan's foresight into his destiny—the limitation of his powers in this respect being probably an outcome of his naturalistic origin—Prometheus declines to gratify his desire. That this relation of conflict and rivalry between the deities might have been suggested by natural phenomena is a truth we have sufficiently insisted on. To early observers all the great processes of Nature were largely volitional. The laws that determined them were regarded as endowed with direct purpose and determination. Winds and clouds, for example, waged a war for the mastery. Sunshine and storms brought their rival wills into collision. Shooting stars and the falling lightning manifested the superiority of the firmament over inferior beings who attempted its invasion. This conviction of the discordant volitions of the great powers of nature was of course confirmed and intensified when social experience demonstrated how the wills of human beings often run counter one to the other.

But a more important phase of the Nature interpretation of Prometheus is found in man's own relation to Nature. It is impossible to conceive reasoning beings living any time in the world without perceiving that their wills, desires, efforts were in immediate relation often antagonistic to some great power outside of them, whose laws and volitions were equally inscrutable and irreversible. However the action of this power might be construed, whether as a blind unimpassioned fate or as an anthropomorphised deity of perpetually changing purpose, such as Zeus, there could be no question of the power nor of the inferiority of the man whose lot it was to contend with it. When this idea became sufficiently matured and generalised,

some such relation as that described by Aeschylus in his Prometheus as existing between Zeus and the Titan was the result. It is observable that Zeus employs the harsher and more violent aspects of Nature to overthrow the Titan, while Prometheus on the other hand appeals to her gentle and beneficent phases, such as the sun, the fruitful earth (which he also calls his mother), the gentle zephyr, the multitudinously smiling ocean. Moreover, the effect of Prometheus's gift of fire is described as elevating its possessors above the necessities and restrictions of Nature, and teaching them to divert her laws and processes from their normal course to their own special advantage.

No doubt Nature, regarding it as in part personified by the supreme divinity of Olympus, is exhibited as an overmastering irresistible power, the sole absolute will to which all others were in theory compelled to render obedience. Still Nature is not omnipotent. As a principle of material force, it is liable to be thwarted by intellectual or spiritual principles. In this respect Nature occupied in Greek thought the same position as did Fate or Zeus. One or the other, or even all combined, might array themselves against the good man, might put forth all their strength to crush him, but their success in the effort was by no means certain. Thus we have exemplified in Prometheus the lesson so often inculcated by all the great dramatists and chief philosophers of Greece—the superiority of mind over matter—the truth that free-will may victoriously contend even with fate—that man may effectively struggle with the forces of Nature, both by his power of doing, and his capacity for patient suffering. And this leads us to

III. The ethical significance of the drama. Regarding the opposition of Prometheus to Zeus as a contest between opposing volitions, it teaches how virtue, unselfishness, and sympathy might rise superior to every despotism, whether human or divine. For we must never leave out of sight that Prometheus had incurred the ire of Zeus, not by any act of self-seeking or personal advantage, but by conferring favours on poor, despised humanity. Kratos, as the executor of the Olympian decrees, admits that one object of his punishment was to make him cease from his philanthropic mood, though it proved utterly ineffective for such a purpose, and throughout the story the love of the

Titan for mortals is set forth as a crime committed against the gods.

We are here confronted with the important fact that the religious thought of Greece—like that of all peoples who possess a theology—occasionally presented a dichotomy between religious and ethical duty. Their deities were popularly conceived, not only as out of sympathetic relation with humanity, but as manifesting an attitude of hostility, disdain, or caprice towards them. The recollection of this will help us to understand certain anomalies—at least they seem so to us—both in the characters of the divinities themselves, and in the light in which they were regarded by men. Thus it is clear that the immoral conduct ascribed to Zeus, prompted though it often was both by lust and by unbounded contempt for the rights and virtues of mankind, did not produce in the average Greek that feeling of utter loathing which they excite in us, though it is impossible to suppose that they did not create a feeling of dislike and mistrust among all right-minded men. Now *Prometheus Vincetus* must, in my judgment, be regarded as disclosing a break and a new point of departure in Hellenic religious tradition. Zeus is here implicitly arraigned both generally for his want of sympathy with the race men, and especially for his unchastity in the case of Io, and judgment is tacitly pronounced against him on each count of the indictment. Prometheus is thus the embodiment for the time being of the rights of humanity. Himself the son of Themis, or Justice, he represents and exemplifies human ethics as distinguished from theology. He denotes that advance—an indubitable mark of progress in every theological system—which is indicated by a fuller and more unconditional recognition of the claims of men on the justice and sympathy of the gods. It would be easy to show by a glance at the writings of the other great dramatists and philosophers of Greece, that this protest of humanitarianism against the traditional theology was by no means a unique phenomenon in Hellenic literature.

A further ethical lesson inculcated by Prometheus was the indomitable self-assertion that was regarded as the peculiar prerogative of virtue and disinterestedness by the foremost thinkers of Greece. We must, no doubt, admit that Aeschylus represents the Titan as sustained in his contest against Zeus by

some amount of obstinacy.¹ But a more powerful influence in the same direction was the persuasion that justice, virtue, unselfishness, and philanthropy were arrayed on his side. In no part of the drama is this ethical self-assertion more strikingly manifest than the climax with which it terminates. Indeed, it would be difficult to match in sublimity and moral grandeur this magnificent close of the greatest of Greek tragedies. The heroic Titan, brave in the conviction of the justice and benevolence of his task, hurls defiance at the cruel despotism of Olympus, and regards Zeus's terrific onslaught with imperturbable serenity as "intended to frighten him". To him justice and humanity are superior to divine prerogatives, superior even to the unscrupulous malevolence of Zeus himself. He is, however, aware that this ethical defiance of Olympian despotism is only attainable by indomitable self-reliance, and by a readiness to endure the extremest physical tortures. He may thus be designated an ideal Hellenic martyr. He is a witness for the truth which has so often found noble expression in the world's history that bodily tortures are powerless against spiritual vigour and a determined will, based on the foundation of conscious rectitude and benevolence.

Nor is this majestic endurance of Prometheus impaired by an impatient expectation of release from his sufferings. Indeed, with all his foresight it does not seem that he has any clear or consistent notion of the manner or conditions of his future deliverance. At least his anticipation of such deliverance is never cherished as a palliative of his present torments. He rather holds that suffering is the normal destiny of those who contend with powerful oppression—the normal fate of the enlighteners and civilisers of humanity.

It would be interesting to speculate on the sentiments with which the average Greek audience left the theatre (for the consecutive performance of the three portions of the Trilogie may be considered doubtful) at the close of the *Prometheus Vinculus*, when the proscenium veiled from their view the benevolent

¹ Welcker has well observed that the insolence (*ὕβρις*) of the Titan is only a requital in kind of Zeus's conduct towards him. *Griech. Götterl.*, vol. ii., p. 257.

Titan "crushed but not subdued" by the terrors of Zeus, and had listened to his last appeal to the majesty of earth and the æther suffused with sunlight. On which side their sympathies were ranged it is needless to ask. Zeus was the supreme divinity of their ordinary every-day worship. To him they rendered prayers and offered sacrifices. They maintained his temples and supported his priests. And yet, by the magic of the dramatist's art, by his daring appeal to human instincts and feelings, they were compelled for the time to disown their deity, and to side with the despiser and mocker of his supremacy. No doubt the arraignment which Aeschylus preferred against him is rather implied than avowed. There is at least no overt and elaborate incrimination of all the deities of Olympus, like that put forth by Xenophanes a century before; still less do we find that cynical mockery of the national gods which characterised Euripides. Aeschylus is content to indicate by the complaints of Prometheus and the outspoken sympathies of the chorus that the ruler of Olympus had attained his position by fraud and cruelty—that he represented not justice but power—that in the satisfaction of his arbitrary will he disdained and ill-used the race of mankind—that he enviously denied them such blessings as might haply approximate their condition to that of the gods. But in all this Zeus merely acted according to popular Hellenic belief within his confessed rights. The superior of gods and men had in theory an acknowledged claim to exercise his supremacy. These were beliefs professedly admitted by all the Greeks. It was only when this prerogation of autocracy became forcibly contrasted with the inherent rights of created beings—as represented, for example, by Prometheus—that this conviction received a shock, and probably was undermined in the minds of bolder thinkers among the Hellenes. They saw that before Zeus were of necessity justice, reason, and goodness, that there were moral attributes no less than a material inexorable Fate to which in the interests of humanity and virtue he was compelled to render allegiance. The conviction was analogous to a fundamental maxim of Greek politics, *viz.*, that no conceivable prerogative on the part of a ruler could annihilate the rights of those he ruled. Indeed, both the political and ethical convictions were products of the very profound sense of personal freedom and justice which as a rule is found to charac-

terise the Hellenic race. Very noteworthy in this connection are the two allegations, firstly, of Kratos that no one is free excepting Zeus, and, secondly, of Prometheus that Zeus kept justice to himself. Greater grounds of umbrage against the supreme divinity of Olympus could hardly have been conceived. Much of the highest speculation of Greece both among its philosophers and its dramatists may be said to consist of the vindication of human morality and free-will against the inexorable coercion of Fate and Zeus. Notwithstanding the seeming omnipotence with which the forces of Nature, the irrevocable effects of Time, etc., appeared to oppress the manifestation of human ability and energy, the power of human volition to recalcitrate against these tyrants, to vindicate its own freedom of self-assertion, was distinctly seen and acknowledged. Prometheus is thus the symbol of free volition as opposed to a reckless immoral coercion. He is a mythical ancestor of a long line of descendent ideas—religious, ethical, and philosophical—in which human individuality in its diverse phases is opposed to external despotism. The antagonism of mind to matter is only a more general aspect of the same conflict. Prometheus is the representative of foresight, reason, thought; Zeus being the exponent of material force animated by imperfect intellectuality and foresight. In this particular, Prometheus is also contrasted with his brother Titans. In their war against the new dynasty of Olympus they refuse to listen to Prometheus, who recommends cunning as superior to brute force, and assures them that it is by these mental qualities that the new divinities must be vanquished. They refuse to listen to him, and hence their defeat. Thus Prometheus, among his other implications, may be taken to express that stage in human evolution when intellect, forethought, contrivance, are seen to be more powerful than material energy in man's strife with Nature or Fate. Welcker has well pointed out how a similar opposition of intellectual against material force is symbolised by the rivalry of Achilles and Odusseus,¹ and remarks that the idea is a favourite one in the Homeric poems. We cannot, however, say that the superiority of intellectual to material force is distinctly marked in the "Iliad" and "Odyssey," while it forms a root-thought of the Prometheus myth.

¹ *Epischer Cyclus*, ii., p. 415.

It would not be difficult to show how the Promethean conception of "eternal and immutable morality" leavened the minds of the foremost characters in Greece at the highest period of her history. Her chief thinkers and statesmen seemed to have partaken of the *Προμήθειον φάρμακον*, which the legend declared to have been generated from the blood of the Titan. They were often dominated by a sense of duty, of virtue and honour, of human sympathy and disinterestedness, of enlightened patriotism which rose far above the level of thought and action which the common mythology ascribed to the rulers of Olympus. Men like Parmenides, Demokritos, Aristides, Perikles and Sokrates derived no small part of their influence from a calm, self-contained, ethical standard, which owed little or nothing to the current theological teaching of their time; nay, which sometimes even came into conflict with it. The *Prometheus Vincitus* is only one of a large class of dramas in which human ethics and duties are vindicated at the expense of the customary deeds of the gods. The same fact also serves to explain what has puzzled so many inquirers into Greek thought—the forbearance of its leading exponents with the crude mythology of the popular belief. Adopting the same process as that employed by other advanced thinkers when popular creeds are in imperfect harmony with reason and science, they instinctively regenerated in their own minds and invested with ethical significance the root-conceptions which underlay the divinities of Olympus.

IV. Not the least significant among the secondary meanings of the Prometheus is what I have termed its social import. Humanity and its progress constitute its real themes. They are not indeed obtruded on the recognition of the beholders, for it is observable that a genuine human being, with the doubtful exception of Io, nowhere appears during the progress of the drama. No doubt the other two portions of the Aeschylean Trilogy contained direct representations of mankind in their relations both to the Olympian deities and to Prometheus; but in the *Prometheus Vincitus* the dramatic action is confined to divine and semi-divine personages. Still humanity is the *ultima ratio* of the Titan's action, and as a consequence of his passion as well, as he repeatedly says, the cause of his punishment is his too great friendship for mankind.

The first consideration hereby suggested is the view indicated by the drama as to the relation of man to the gods, and the modification of the older beliefs of Greek mythology in this particular. The primary conception of that relation was that which is customary in all rudimentary stages of religious speculation—*viz.*, it was one of fear, jealousy and antagonism. The deities were immortal and blessed, men were mortal and unhappy. That men should seek to escape from their inferior condition signified impious presumption on their part, while any attempt to communicate divine gifts to men was regarded as high treason against the gods. Any advance of humanity in knowledge, prosperity, fertility of resource and contrivance was held to entail the awakening of what Herodotus termed the divine jealousy (*φθονερὸν τὸ θεῖον*), and the extent of this unworthy susceptibility on the part of the divinities of Olympus has been often remarked by classical writers.¹ We find similar stages in the early religious evolution of other races, *e.g.*, the story of the Fall in early Semitic and Chaldaic literature. Now Prometheus may be defined as an immortal protest against this disjunction of the divine and the human. Despite the wills of the gods, he in pure compassion to men imparts to them celestial honours. He bestows on them the divine fire, which, like the forbidden fruit in Eden, renders men like the gods. Thus he appears, among his other meanings, to mark that advanced stage in intellectual insight when both human and divine reason are recognised as one single inseparable entity or attribute; at least, when the difference between them is discerned to be merely one of degree, not of kind. How fully this fruitful idea took possession of Greek speculation is a large topic into which we need not enter. Suffice it to remark that the identity of human and divine reason—the indissoluble oneness of truth, goodness and purity, whether heaven-born or earth-born—is a conception which enters largely into all the idealistic thought of Greece, beginning with the Eleatics and ending with the Neo-Platonists.

Another human aspect of the Prometheus, related to the preceding, is the tacit protest it contains against the doctrine of

¹ Compare Nägelsbach, *Homerische Theologie*, 2^{te} Auf., p. 33.

Nemesis. No reproach of Prometheus is more common than that he has honoured mortals too much, or "more than just". Although the son of Themis, he has transgressed the divine maxim of moderation which was the Hellenic limit of action and aspiration, whether for men or gods. It almost seems to be implied that the Titan might have manifested interest in his human *protégés* and adopted methods of serving them without proceeding to the lengths he actually did. Lesser honour than the supreme one of possessing celestial fire might have satisfied the requirements of day-lived beings. This was no doubt the current estimate of the actions of the Titan, and represents the standpoint whence the ordinary religious Hellene may possibly have contemplated his punishment with indifference if not with positive satisfaction. But it is remarkable we find no acknowledgment of such excess on the part of Prometheus himself—not the smallest intimation that his conduct has been unworthy the son of Themis.¹ It is true he admits that the dissemination of knowledge may be attended with suffering, and even implies that their conjunction is inevitable, but he never allows that its possession by men can be aught but the greatest of blessings. As we have seen, he delights to dwell upon and magnify the effects of his gift. He sets forth in a tone of evident self-complacency the diverse nature of those effects. He places no limit to its present use or future potency. He claims for it the proud and unique position of being the only source of all human arts. Notwithstanding his own experience, he has no mistrust of its influence on mankind, and no fear of its becoming excessive. He manifests, in a word, the unrestrained confidence in enlightenment that has characterised so many of the noblest intellects in the world's history, and which must be accepted as a primary requisite in all genuine truth search.² That there is another side

¹It should be remembered, as helping to explain the evident sympathy of Aeschylus for his noblest dramatic creation, and for the imperfect play which Nemesis appears to have in the punishment of Prometheus, that the poet expresses in a remarkable passage of the *Agamemnon* his dissent from the current Greek notions on the subject of Nemesis. He does not think prosperity, progress, etc., are of themselves invariable precursors of calamity (*Agam.*, ed. Paley, lines 727-755, where see his note).

²This Promethean vindication of the *unlimited* enlightenment of

to this picture we have already admitted. That human knowledge and the inevitable conditions of its search may have their drawbacks is a truth on which the foes of Prometheus strongly insist. It is also a theme which has employed the pens of the greatest poets both of ancient and of modern times. Still this is not the aspect of the question that commends itself to the Titan, nor is his high estimate of knowledge achievement in the present affected by the truth that the future can only be an object for blind hopes.

We have already pointed out that the Prometheus implicitly asserts the rights of men as against the gods. In some respects this is the most important feature of the drama. It denotes that gradual insurrection of the highest Greek intellects against the dominant mythology which historically began with Xenophanes and continued with unabated force through all the after-course of Greek history. Prometheus thus becomes the symbol of individuality, the embodiment of righteous self-assertion against oppression, whether by the gods or by human usurpers of unjust power. We can readily see how this principle of conscious rectitude and unselfishness which animated the Titan might be extended to every similar insurrection against unjust power. The spirit of Prometheus is indeed found in some of the noblest characters of the Greek drama. We recognise it in Orestes, Antigone, Electra, Hippolitus, Herakles, etc., waging war with unjust authority, sometimes of the gods, sometimes of human traditions and customs, sometimes of express laws and enactments, and though capable, like all useful principles, of abuse, yet often proving its utility as a standpoint whence overweening despotisms of every kind might be assailed or resisted. Nor is this all, for the individual being part of the community there is a necessary transference of his standpoint, given identical circumstances to his fellows. The divine fire of reason conferred by Prometheus

humanity has been pointed out and insisted on by most of the commentators on the drama—notably, as is well known, by Goethe in his version of the myth. Similarly, Herder declares the noblest and probably the most natural meaning of the drama to be “*die Bildung und Fortbildung des Menschengeschlechtes zu jeder Cultur; das Fortstreben des Göttlichen Geistes im Menschen zu Aufwerkung all seiner Kräfte*” (*Sämmt. Werke*, xv., p. 151).

was not on the individual man alone, but on the race. Indeed, the community of human reason with divine postulated the similarity of the faculty in all reasoning beings. Hence in ultimate implication Prometheus, as the fire-giver, is the founder of all human communities based on rational principles. Indeed it may even be questioned whether much of the self-assertion that constitutes the noblest individuality is not based on the tacit conviction that the individual represents for the time being the community to which he belongs. He expresses in his single personality the sense of justice, of goodness, of wisdom, that are the necessary bonds—the sole indestructible bases—of all social order and unity. It is just this common possession of identical instincts and feelings which explains in the *Prometheus Vincetus* the sympathy of the chorus in the civilising enterprises and consequent sufferings of the Titan.

It would be easy to extend these social implications of the Prometheus myth. If the Titan represents human individuality in its struggle with unrighteous power, and implies the common reason which is the foundation of every community, he also symbolises the detailed requirements of man as a social being. In his own enumeration of the blessings he conferred on man, we cannot help being struck by the fact that all of them are social advantages. They are not designed to benefit man regarded as a solitary recluse, but as a member of the race or of any given community. Thus house-building, language, numbers, rudimentary astronomy, the science of medicine, religious rites, are especially social arts. Indeed, it might be alleged that the Greek possessed no other standpoint than social utility from whence to estimate any art or science. We may hence regard the *Prometheus Vincetus* as containing an early intimation of the truth, since often insisted on, that civilisation is indissolubly bound up with the general progress of social life.

The *Prometheus* is the first drama in history which may be termed skeptical, that is, which turns upon the dissidence that inevitably emerges between a popular creed founded on a supernatural basis and a critical rationalism which must needs reconcile its conclusions with the *dicta* of human experience; which recounts the conflict between that passive stage in the growth of humanity when men receive without question the beliefs of their

forefathers and the active stage which determines to analyse and discriminate between them; which assumes as a basis the right to judge of the laws of nature, the dogmas of theology, the power of circumstances from a human and individual standpoint;¹ which, moreover, takes cognisance of human knowledge and reason not only from the side of their advantages, but also from that of their drawbacks and limitations. It is the precursor of the Book of Job in Hebrew literature, of Goethe's "Faust," of Shakespeare's "Hamlet," of Calderon's "El Magico Prodigioso," and of Lord Byron's "Manfred". I do not mean to say that the other skeptical dramas do not include phases of knowledge search and knowledge growth not contained in the *Prometheus*. That they should do so was an inevitable result of their being outcomes of very different circumstances of thought and belief than those which existed in the time of Aeschylus. Thus while the *Prometheus* signifies the antagonism of man and his advocate against the deities of Olympus, Job represents humanity vindicating its rights against the Hebrew Jahve. "El Magico Prodigioso" and "Faust" portray the truth-seeker struggling with conditions of knowledge and belief into which Christianity enters as a large, and in Calderon's play, predominant factor. "Hamlet" denotes the contention between overmuch thought and obvious human duty. Lord Byron's "Manfred" reproduces and accentuates the anti-theistic humanitarian standpoints of *Prometheus*, Job, and "Faust". But notwithstanding these

¹ Welcker tries to make a not very intelligible distinction between the more anti-theistic implications of the *Prometheus* of Hesiod and the directly humanitarian object of the *Prometheus Vincit*. He says: "Das Streben des Menschegeistes, der sich seines eignen Willens bewusst geworden ist, sich selbständig fühlt, über die Schranken des Endlichen, der Abhängigkeit von einem höhern Willen hinaus, indem ihm seine Freiheit als eigne Errungenschaft als ein Raub vorkommt, der Muth hat sich Gott gleich zu stellen, mit Gott zu richten, sich gegen ihn zu empören, wie in einem Hiob, Sisyphos, dem Hesiodischen Prometheus und Faust, ist dem Prometheus des Aeschylus nicht der letzte Zweck des Drama, sondern vorbildlich wird durch den Titanen in der Weltregierung ermittelt was im Wesen des Menschen, ausser dem Gefühl Gottes, das tiefste ist, freier Wille und Rechtsgefühl" (*Griech. Götterlehre*, ii., 249, 250). But it is difficult to see how human free-will and sense of justice could find their due sway, unless they were capable of being arraigned for justifiable reasons against arbitrary power.

dissimilarities in treatment, arising from varying times and circumstances, the general theme, the central thought, is the same. Generally we may define it as an attempt to answer the question : "What are the true relations between man as a reasoning being and the higher powers, traditional authorities, etc., by which he is surrounded?" Nor is it only in theme that the *Prometheus Vincetus* and succeeding skeptical dramas resemble each other, but also in structure. The dramatic action in each case consists largely of a gradually unfolded and elaborated antagonism between the exponent of free thought and his dogmatising friends, who counsel his submission to "the powers that be". Thus the relation between Prometheus on the one side, and Okeanos and Hermes on the other, is further exemplified in the opposed conceptions of Job and his three friends, as well as in the contrast between Faust and Wagner, between Hamlet and Polonius, between the Pagan Cyprian and the Christian Justina in Calderon's play. Further resemblances will meet us when we come to investigate those dramas in subsequent essays. For the present we may summarise those points and ideas in respect of which the *Prometheus Vincetus* has been of classical dramas by far the most fruitful for all after-time, premising, however, that the mingled aspects of knowledge, its good and evil sides, are divided between Prometheus and his partial friends or open foes. We seem then to have indicated by Aeschylus with more or less distinctness :—

1. That the condition of man in relation to the deities is one of independent rational recognition, not of coercion nor of help-less slavery.

2. That man by the gift of reason and foresight has a capacity for progress in some respects limited, in others unlimited. The latter seems generally, as already explained, the view of Prometheus, though it is also expressed incidentally by his foes, as for example in the words of Kratos when he urges Hephaistos to his bonds, sure

For from th' impossible he'll find a way.

3. That there is no inherent distinction between human and divine reason, nor between human and divine ethics.

4. That man possesses by means of his reason and conscience

a sense of individuality which enables him to face every kind of injustice and external coercion with greater or less equanimity; in other words, that mind is essentially superior to matter, volition to arbitrary power.

5. That knowledge search is allied with suffering as well as with perpetual effort. The latter truth, as is well known, is the root-thought of Goethe's "Faust".

6. That knowledge search should be attended with becoming modesty and self-distrust. This seems indicated by the cynical maxim of Okeanos: "It is best for him who is wise not to seem so," as well as by the remark of the chorus—

Who worship Adrasteia are the wise.

This is, however, not the true Promethean standpoint so much as an adverse comment upon it by its enemies.

7. That knowledge may in some respects consist more in anticipation than in actual realisation. Besides being implied in the name Prometheus this seems one meaning of the noteworthy statement that Prometheus bestowed upon men "blind hopes". Passing over the epithet "blind," which adds nothing to the meaning of hopes, we have here indicated one of the most peculiar features of truth search, which is moreover exemplified in all the skeptical dramas—I mean its relation to the Infinite. This probably is the reason of Prometheus for ignoring the reproach of his enemies. If men, he might have argued, were, as they alleged, "creatures of a day," they were yet gifted with foresight, expectation and hope. They could transcend in imagination and aspiration the limits of their terrestrial existence—could look forward and grasp by anticipation the boundless vista of futurity. This is also part of the transcendental signification of the drama on which idealists both ancient and modern have not unjustifiably laid stress.

8. That virtue and disinterestedness are superior to every kind of immoral authority, as well as to mere power of whatever sort or origin.

9. Another lesson of a somewhat different kind is the implication of the drama for the intellectual history of humanity. For the first time in Greek thought we have expressed in a form equally distinct and picturesque the relation of metaphysical and

spiritual ideas to their physical origin. The *Prometheus Vincetus* is a drama based upon a theory of evolution. It represents the growth of mankind from their primary recognition of physical facts and their own needs in relation to them, to the highest spiritual and moral truths. By its very structure it denotes the progress of men in analogical reasoning. It has therefore a special significance for a period like the present, when evolution is the accepted mode for all phenomena whether physical or metaphysical.

Possessing all these varied implications, we are prepared to understand the marvellous fascination which the Prometheus myth has exercised on the noblest intellects that have adorned the history of humanity. It appeals directly to all that is heroic, magnanimous and disinterested in man's highest nature. Whenever human giants have been crushed by some overmastering and unscrupulous tyranny and have demanded some principle of resistance to it; whenever they have striven for further knowledge and enlightenment and have determined at whatever risk to attain it; whenever the great heroes of mankind have felt their energies thwarted, their aspirations circumscribed by the iron fetters of fate or circumstance; whenever ethical qualities, justice, unselfishness, generosity, have approved themselves superior to mere force and authority, whether (supposedly) divine or human; whenever leaders of men have had to contend with neglect, with solitude and friendlessness, with abuse and persecution, then the image of the suffering Titan and his indomitable spirit have exercised a most potent sway. Whatever may have been the nature and extent of that worship which some writers suppose to have been offered at his shrine in the Academy at Athens, the character of Prometheus has undoubtedly been enshrined in many a human heart, and has obtained from congenial spirits a full measure of fealty and reverence. With the single exception of a crucified Jesus, no example of suffering goodness has taken such profound hold on the imaginations and affections of humanity. The extent of this power is instructively shown by its diversified character. Not only has the Promethean fire kindled the intellects and quickened the imaginations of all the most eminent thinkers in the world's history, but it has disseminated its influence in the

multiform irradiatory manner in which all great conceptions exercise their power. The nature and amount of this diversity may be readily gathered from a list of the more illustrious among those who have been attracted by the story and have recognised its profound significance. Thus Prometheus has exercised a prepotent sway on Hesiod, Aeschylus, Sokrates, Plato, Lucian, Cicero, Plotinos, some of the later Christian Fathers, Abelard, Giordano Bruno, Campanella, Bacon, Vico, Calderon, Jean Paul, Herder, Goethe, Fichte, Heine, Leopardi, Shelley, Byron and Coleridge. Nor of less import is the varied modes in which the narrative has been re-constructed and invested with new meanings by these and other variously minded thinkers. While idealists, such as Plato and Plotinos in ancient and Coleridge in modern times, have discovered in it the germ of an abstruse and elaborate system of transcendentalism,¹ cynics and misanthropists, like Lucian and Leopardi, have in the spirit of Mephistopheles thrown ridicule on the Promethean gift of reason to mankind. Shelley interpreted the myth in a mystico-naturalistic sense, characteristic of his genius, but also significant of the wide-ranging capacity of the story. Byron seized especially those features of Prometheus which represent the Titan as contending with invincible destiny. Hence his "witch-drama" possesses rather Epimethean than Promethean significance. Campanella, Bacon, Jean Paul, Herder, Goethe, Fichte, etc., agree in laying stress on the Aeschylean notion that Prometheus enlightens mankind against the volitions of the powers that be; while Giordano Bruno, Heine, etc., make the suffering Prometheus a symbol of down-trodden humanity in its perennial struggle with tyranny, whether human or superhuman. Other writers, of whom Vico may stand as a type, have laid stress on portions of the Prometheus myth not contained in the drama of Aeschylus. Such are some of the many renderings which the *Prometheus Vincetus* has received—a few of the induments in which the mighty Titan has been invested by the intellects and fancies of minor Prometheuses, most of whom share his indomi-

¹ Of these attempts, Coleridge's is at once the most subtle and suggestive, but it suffers from excessive elaboration and refinement (see his *Lectures on Shakspere*, vol. ii., p. 208, etc.).

table spirit, his passion for enlightenment, his unbounded philanthropy.

Nor is there any probability that the influence which the creation of Aeschylus has enjoyed in the past will grow less in the future. As long as humanity in its best and noblest development remains what it is; as long as mortals have to struggle with their surroundings and their incompatibility or imperfection; as long as human knowledge is recognised as partial, and its search as entailing disappointment and suffering; as long as generosity and self-sacrifice are regarded as essentially divine; as long as human free will, animated by noble impulse, is recognised as more powerful than any arbitrary power, so long will Prometheus preserve his sway over the thoughts, feelings and imaginations of mankind.

THE BOOK OF JOB

MOTTOES.

הַחֶקֶר אֱלֹהִים תִּמְצֵא אִם עַד־תִּבְלִית שִׁבִּי תִמְצֵא :
גָּבְהִי שָׁמַיִם מִה תִּפְעַל עֲמָקָה מִשְׁאוֹל מִה־תִּדְּעַ :
Words of Zophar, Job, xi., 7, 8.

וְהִתְבָּמָה מִצִּוְנוֹת־מִצָּא וְאִי זֶה־מְקוֹם בִּינָה :
לֹא־יָדַע אֲנוֹשׁ עֲרָפָה וְלֹא תִמְצֵא בְּאֶרֶץ הַחַיִּים :
תַּהוֹם אָמַר לֹא בִי־הָיָא וְיָם אָמַר אֵין עֲמָדִי :
וַיֹּאמֶר לְאָדָם הֵן יִרְאֶת אֲדָנִי הִיא חֲבָמָה וְסוּר מִרַע בִּינָה.
Words of Job, xxviii., 12-14, 28.

οὐκ οὖν, Προμηθεὺ τοῦτο γιγνώσκεις, ὅτι
ὀργῆς νοσοῦσης εἰσὶν ἰατροὶ λόγοι ;

Prometheus Vincit, 385-6.

Mais la question que l'auteur se propose est précisément celle que tout penseur agit sans pouvoir la résoudre ; ses embarras, ses inquiétudes, cette façon de retourner dans tous les sens le nœud fatal sans en trouver l'issue, renferment bien plus de philosophie que la scolastique tranchante qui prétend imposer silence aux doutes de la raison par des réponses d'une apparente clarté.

RENAN, *Job*, p. lxvii.

PASSING from the masterpiece of the Greek drama to that marvellous book which, if any, may claim a like position in Hebrew literature, our first feeling is that of dissimilarity in respect of environment. They are products of races differing in origin, in religion, in political and social life. But amid these divergencies a closer observation discerns analogies and similarities, neither few nor unimportant, sufficient to warrant the juxtaposition in which we have here placed them.

For present purposes these might be classed as: 1, Inevitable; 2, Accidental.

1. Notwithstanding the contrasts necessarily existing between the great religious and the great cultured races of antiquity, their varying conceptions as to most matters of human concernment, they share a few striking points of resemblance. Each has discovered that there are problems of equal interest and profundity attaching to man and his place in the universe. Each has attained a stage of intellectual growth which seems to justify a fearless investigation of such problems. Each determines from a common conviction of the existence of absolute justice and human right to oppose traditional methods of solving them; and in that endeavour each finds reason to arraign its own ruling deity—the Zeus of the Greek Olympus, and the Jahve of later Jewish theology. We have termed these similarities inevitable, because they refer to such a relation of man to the universe as must under any conceivable hypothesis be necessary. Among every thinking people the theme of man with respect to his cosmical surroundings must always excite attention and interest. Nor can we feel much surprise if, the main conditions of the problem being always alike, there should ensue some mutual resemblance in its attempted solutions, however different their attendant circumstances.

2. Not less striking are the accidental similarities between

the *Prometheus* and the Book of Job. The first consists in the association of knowledge with physical light and light-giving bodies. No doubt this is fuller and more direct in the *Prometheus* than in Job. In the former it forms the mythical plot of the drama, in the latter it is more incidental and vague. Still the Book of Job is itself the product of a time when Sabeism was a not uncommon form of idolatry. Job himself intimates that star-worship existed around him, and disclaims all complicity with such idolatry (chap. xxxi., 26, 27). The stars, especially those of the morning, are identified with the angels as the sons of God. The heavenly constellations are regarded, just as in Greek mythology, as giants and monsters who, having risen in insurrection against the ruling deity, have been defeated and chained to their places in the sky. Sometimes these are only alluded to indirectly, but frequently they are expressly mentioned by name. Thus we have the crooked serpent (called by the LXX. the Apostate Dragon) mentioned as being of the number of those (constellations) with which Jahve has garnished the heavens. We have also allusions to the dragon Rahab as well as to the comrades who aided him against Jahve (chap. ix., 13).¹ *Ash*, the Great Bear (?), is probably another monster subdued by Jahve, so also is *Chesil* (Orion), who by some is identified with Nimrod, the traditional chief of the antediluvian Titans, but whose name the LXX. translates by Hesperos the evening star. The twelve signs of the Zodiac are also mentioned, as well as the constellations Pleiades and Arctourus. Nor less significant is the fact that the dawn and the dawn stars seem invested in the Book of Job with peculiar sanctity. The former is often personified, and its effect described with equal truth and beauty. Few of the thousands of similes expended on the subject are more expressive than Job's comparison of the result of the dawn to the impression of a seal on clay. The dawn is further said to give a new vesture to the earth, to distribute the east winds, to vanquish the darkness, and, in a word, to exercise those varied

¹ *I.e.*, עֲזָרֵי רָהַב. Literally, "the helpers of Rahab". The sense of the passage is explained by the parallel passage, chap. xxvi., 12, as well as by other places in the Old Testament, where reference is made to Rahab. Compare *Ges. Thes., ad. voc.*, and Ewald, *Das Buch Hiob*, p. 126.

functions which render the earth the fitting sphere of human life and action. Thus the stars of the twilight are said to look forward to the dawn, just as they are in the myth of Prometheus.¹ Another Promethean element of Job is found in the character of the lightning. This is always regarded as Jahve's messenger—a fire of God which descends from heaven, and carries his errands among men.

To those who have read the preceding essay, it is needless to point out how all these elements have points of similitude to different portions of the Prometheus myth. Nor is this all. The Book of Job contains more than any book of the Old Testament traces of Jewish belief in a Titanomachy. Satan himself, the tempter of Job, and in probable origin the compeer of Azazel and of the Titans before the flood, is still regarded as a member of Jahve's celestial council, wherein his voice, though dissentient, continues to possess some power. We find other allusions to supposed conflicts in some primeval period between Jahve and certain other potentates, who were then approximately his equals. We have already spoken of the monsters whom he thus defeated and chained as starry constellations to the firmament. Job is himself compared, and by no means without reason, to the giants that existed before the flood, and is said to share their Titanic defiance of the deity (xxii., 16, 17). Eliphaz demands:—

Wilt thou hold then to the ancient way,
Which the men of sin once trod,
Who were cut down before their time,
Whose foundation was o'erturned by the flood,
Who said unto God: "Depart from us,"
And (asked) what the Almighty could do to them?

—a passage, we may incidentally remark, which fully justifies the classification of Job with the heaven-storming heroes of Greek and Hebrew mythology. Indeed, Job himself may be said to sanction, though unconsciously, this comparison, for in one passage (chap. xvi., 14) he complains that Jahve has treated him as an ancient giant, *i.e.*, Titan. Further allusions of the same kind will meet us when we come to investigate the book.

Another form of Titanomachy found, as we have seen, in the Prometheus myth is also discovered in Job, *viz.*, the strife and

¹ Compare preceding Essay, p. 24.

conflict of different meteorological phenomena regarded as personified beings. The sun and dew, clouds and wind, light and darkness struggle together with the result that some are victors and others are vanquished. Occasionally Titanic impulses seem ascribed to these terrestrial beings. The most expressive and poetical of these passages is Elihu's description of the mist-giant (quoted in the preceding essay¹) gathering his forces together, ascending the mountain side and scaling the very heavens, when he wages fierce battle till he is vanquished by the thunder and the lightning flash.

Now these evidences of dissension and conflict in the ruling powers of the universe are described by the Book of Job not only as belonging to a remote past in Jahve's government of the world, but as characterising his actual rule. They are not merely fragments of old myths, they are parts of a creed held and believed when the Book of Job was written. Just as Zeus had his opponents in the Olympian council, so has Jahve in his celestial conclave. In human affairs, Satan is literally and really his antagonist, though he can only work on some men by the divine permission.

We are far from wishing to push unduly these analogies between Prometheus and Job. We shall presently find, when after examining the book we come to speak of the comparative ideas and general conclusions of the two dramas, not a few dissimilarities between them. What seems important to observe on entering on our subject is that notwithstanding the greater religious advance of the Hebrews, notwithstanding the diversity in respect of their culture and civilisation compared with the Greeks, they share much of their stress on light and light-giving powers, as also their myths and Titanomachies. We are, therefore, although in other respects in a very different region of thought, still at that stage of general human culture in which ideas connected with physical light are passing into others related to its higher analogue, human and rational enlightenment, though in Job we have advanced beyond the particular point of that stage which we found to mark the *Prometheus*.

The dramatic character of the Book of Job is generally

¹ *Ante*, p. 16.

allowed by most Biblical commentators; certainly it possesses the most essential constituents of a drama. It has characters and dialogue. It has a plot and *dénouement*. We might perhaps summarise the plot as consisting of a conspiracy, a trial and a verdict, nearly the same original elements, in fact, as are found in the Trilogy of the *Prometheus*. There are, besides, special points of resemblance, as we shall find, between the Book of Job and the *Prometheus Vincetus*. They share for the most part the same *motif*, the same vigour of invective and defiance of deity, though their final issue is different, and, as might be expected between an Oriental and Greek drama, there is little resemblance between them in respect of dramatic movement and vigorous forward action.

The opening scene of the Job-drama takes place in heaven. Jahve is represented as surrounded by his celestial council—the “hosts of heaven,” or the “sons of God,” as its members are termed indifferently and with reference in each case to their stellar origin. In itself the scene is not unlike the Olympian council described in the *Prometheus*, in which the Titan dissents from the rest of the assembled deities on the question of man’s destiny. At least the Hebrew heaven is not freer from dissentient opinions than the Court of Olympus. Among the rest of the sons of God comes to the celestial conclave Satan, the adversary or “public prosecutor” of humanity. In both the Greek and the Hebrew heaven, man and his relation to God furnishes the apple of discord. Prometheus believes that Zeus has treated mankind too harshly, Satan is of opinion that Jahve treats his people too well. Job, to whom Jahve calls the accuser’s attention as a man in whom even he can find no fault, is in Satan’s opinion precisely a case in point. Job is righteous, objects the accuser, for purely selfish reasons. Jahve has enclosed him and his within a hedge of prosperity, but were Jahve to put forth his hand and touch his substance, Job would deny him to his face. Whereupon Jahve allows Satan to do as he will with his property, so that he does him no personal harm. Accepting the challenge, Satan employs all his power to destroy Job’s substance. All his flocks and herds become a prey to casualties of different kinds, and—heaviest blow of all—his sons and daughters perish by the downfall of the house wherein they are

assembled. But notwithstanding these misfortunes, each following the other with a rapidity which has rendered them proverbial in all after human history, Job does not relinquish his integrity nor forego his trust in Jahve. In his own words, he came naked into the world and naked must he leave it.

A second time Satan appears at the celestial council. Again his attention is directed to Job as a man whose integrity is invincible to all his machinations. But Satan explains his defeat by the well-known law of self-preservation—"Skin for skin, all that a man has will he give for his life". Again we have the same challenge or mutual bargain—the predecessor, no doubt, of all the compacts in the Faust legends, the chief illustration of which will meet us in the next essay. Satan is allowed to visit Job with all sorts of calamities, providing only that he spares his life. He immediately avails himself of this additional permission by afflicting Job with some loathsome and painful disease—probably some form of elephantiasis—but even now he is doomed to defeat. Job declares, in reply to the taunts of his wife, that if a man receives good from Jahve he cannot refuse to receive evil.

Thus far we have the primary elements of a dramatic plot: a conspiracy is entered upon by the ruling powers of the world to test the integrity of a certain man. Accordingly he is made to suffer the most dire misfortunes; and the whole after-portion of the drama is devoted to exemplifying his behaviour under the trial. Satan now disappears from the scene. The action is left between Job and Jahve together with certain persons who take on themselves the office of spokesmen for Jahve. Job has indeed no knowledge that an intermediate agency has been concerned in his calamities, and even if he had known it, it would have made but little difference, he is so fully persuaded of the divine omnipotence that he ascribes all that happens in the world to his sole volition.

At this stage begins the real action of the drama. Overwhelmed with misfortune and crushed by disease, Job presents a terrible exception to the dogma or fixed belief of the Hebrews, which connected integrity with worldly prosperity. Gradually he loses somewhat of his patience. His own experience begins to undermine his creed, so far as that creed consists of the universal

consensus of his nation, *i.e.*, for this particular purpose—the Jews. This consensus, however, finds unqualified advocates in three friends who come to commiserate him. Believing the ordinary creed of the Jews and the inseparable conjunction of sin with misfortune, they proceed to accuse Job of different and manifold transgressions. As they are aware that his character has ever been that of a righteous man, they are compelled to believe that his sins have been secret, and that he is so far guilty of hypocrisy. Thus we have the cruel reproaches of his friends alternating with Job's vehement self-defence forming the greater part of the dialogue, in the course of which much free thought and, from the common Jewish standpoint, speculative licence are evoked.

After being thus stricken by Jahve, Job resembles the victim of Zeus bound down to the desert rocks of Mount Caucasus. He is represented as sitting in ashes and employing a potsherd to ease the irritating itch of his elephantiasis, while near him sit, also on the ground, his three friends too confounded by his inexplicable misfortunes to utter a word. After some days spent in this moody silence, Job at last opens his mouth—no longer to utter only pious expressions of resignation but to mingle with them cries of fierce invective, indignation, and despair.

He begins by cursing the day of his birth; fain would he blot it out from the months of the year. He wishes he had never seen the light, or that the next best fate in the judgment of the old Greek had befallen him, *viz.*, that being born he had immediately died. In language of surpassing pathos and beauty he says:—

For now should I have been at rest—
I should have slept and been at peace
With the kings and great ones of the earth
Who built for themselves the Pyramids,
Or with princes who possessed much gold
And who filled their houses with silver;
Or as a hidden abortion, I had not been
As children who have not seen the light.
There the wicked cease from tormenting,
There the weary are at rest,
There the captives enjoy quiet,
They hear not the voice of the oppressor;
There the great and the small meet together—
And the servant is free from his master.

The casual desire to solve or rather to annihilate the problems of existence by wishing it had never been, is common to all the skeptical dramas. Prometheus wishes Zeus had sentenced him to the unseen world, where no one could have beheld his calamities. Job, to whom existence when prosperous seemed comprehensible and natural enough, sees in it when smitten by adversity the most painful and insoluble of enigmas. Faust, desiring to break down the narrow limits of knowledge by which he seems closed in on every side, is fain to drink the poisonous draught which he thinks will give him freedom; and Hamlet, when the nature of his surroundings and his own task in relation to them is forced upon him, wishes he had never been born, and begins a course of morbid speculation on suicide.

To Job, in common with most Hebrew thinkers, the idea of happiness is so indissolubly joined with existence that the latter without the former is an anomaly. He demands :—

Why is light given to the suffering,
And life to those who are troubled in heart,
Who long for death, though it cometh not,
Who seek it more eagerly than treasure,
Who are happy even unto ecstasy
And rejoice when they have found the grave;
(Why is light given)
To that man whose way is dark,
And whom Jahve hath enclosed on every side?

In this question we have mooted the real problem of the book. Job generalises on human existence from his own experience, with the result of bringing all his former notions of God and man into doubt. Regarded as the gift of omnipotence a human life charged with irremediable sorrow seems inexplicable. A greater antagonism to current Hebrew opinion, which connected suffering with sin and the divine displeasure, could hardly be conceived. Indeed, there was only one possible escape from the dilemma. Job must have transgressed God's commands, although his friends and neighbours had not known it. This is the argument of his three consolers throughout the remainder of the drama. Eliphaz commences the plea in favour of the old Hebrew dogma by adroitly complimenting Job on his influence in the past, especially in strengthening the weak and encouraging the wavering. He asks :—

Is not thy piety, thy trust,
Thy hope—the innocence of thy ways ?

But if so, he appeals to his experience.

Consider then, who being innocent came to nought,
And when have the righteous perished ?

Eliphaz relates his own experience.

Nor myself, I have seen that they who plough evil
And sow ungodliness, do reap its harvest.
At the breath of Jahve they disappear,
Before his anger-storm they vanish.

He seeks to confirm this experience by what he regards as a personal divine revelation. A spirit appears to him in the night, and questions him.

Shall man be held righteous in God's sight ?
Shall mortal be pure before his Maker ?
Jahve trusts not even his own servants,
And in his messengers he finds error.
How much more in dwellers in clay houses,
Whose foundations are laid in dust, etc.

Job may desire to appeal from this omnipotence and fatal supremacy were there any advocate of humanity among the angels to whom he might carry his suit. Eliphaz bids him, remember that misfortune is not accidental.

For evil springeth not from the dust,
Nor doth trouble sprout from the ground,
Rather is man born to trouble
As the sparks of fire mount upwards.

He recommends Job to leave his cause in God's hands and to submit to his chastisement. Indirectly, he accuses him of pride, self-assertion, and reliance on his own wisdom. He tells him that God takes the wise in their own craftiness, and the counsel of cunning men he brings to nought. As the source of all power, the lot of man is dependent on God.

He wounds and heals the wound ;
He strikes and his own hands heal.

In short, Eliphaz reiterates the old Jewish belief in the supremacy of Jahve and in the righteousness of his dealings, estimated by the lot of humanity. The real outcome of his argument is that

Job is justly punished. The complaint he has just uttered seems to indicate the nature of his sin, for it is charged with self-consciousness and with murmuring against the retribution he has doubtless deserved. The consolation thus offered bears a striking resemblance to that which the daughters of Okeanos proffer to Prometheus, while hardly less Titanic and defiant is Job's reception of it.

At the close of Eliphaz' argument, Job again takes up his complaint. His friend has evidently thought lightly of his troubles—indeed, the misconception of his would-be consolers as to the true nature of his sufferings adds to their own weight. He wishes for some method of preventing this injustice.

Would that my bitterness were weighed,
That my sorrows were laid together in balances,
Then would it out-scale the sand of the sea.
For this cause my words are impatient,
For the arrows of the Almighty have pierced me,
Their burning drinks up my life.

He refuses to admit that his complaint is causeless. Had his prosperity continued he had not murmured, for

Doth the wild ass neigh over his pasture?
Doth the ox low over his fodder?

He wishes the Almighty would carry his severity one stage further, and slay him outright. Were he to do this—

Were it his will at once to crush me,
Were he to put forth his hand and cut me off,
Even from hence would spring forth my trust,
On which I lean in all my deepest sorrow,
Ne'er have I transgressed the word of the Holy.

This sublime self-conscious rectitude, this defiance of the extreme power and possible injustice of Jahve, bears a close resemblance to the self-assertion of Prometheus, the chief difference being that Prometheus knows Zeus to be unjust, whereas Job, in a passionate outburst of defiance, only speculates on the injustice of Jahve as a contingency. With this momentary half-consciousness of the divine unrighteousness, Job continues to point out the inequality in this instance of oppressor and oppressed. With bitter irony he demands if his strength is the strength of stones, or whether his body is made of brass

Deprived of every kind of help, each path of safety seems closed against him. The afflicted, he thinks, ought to be pitied by his friends even if he has abandoned the fear of the Almighty. But his own friends have been as treacherous as a winter torrent which deceives the Bedouins in the desert. He expected of them comfort and kindly counsel, but he has received nothing. He made no great demands on their friendship. He did not ask for their property; for deliverance from the hands of Bedouin robbers. He only desired truthful, unprejudiced words, which they refuse to give him. They are therefore no better than those false men who crush orphans and betray friends. Job wishes them to look him in the face and see for themselves whether he is lying. Then—in possible answer to some movement or gesture on their part, as if they contemplated leaving him—he utters the sarcastic wish that they would carry out their apparent intention and abandon him to what they have assumed to be his guilt.

Return then, let not injustice be done,
Go back again, my righteousness is concerned in it;
Is there iniquity in my tongue?
Cannot my taste discern what is perverse?

Job next reverts—perhaps after a pause—to the transitoriness and misery of human life. He compares himself and his desire for death to the servant who toiling in the heat of the day longs for the shadows of evening, or to labourers who eagerly desire the end of their task. His days and nights seem lengthened by his anguish and wretchedness. In addition to his mental sorrows is his bodily disease, which he describes in these piteous terms:—

My body is covered with worm-breeding ulcers and earthy scurf,
My skin is either a scab or a weeping sore.

His life, more fugitive than a weaver's shuttle, is drawing to a close without hope. Presently the eye of God and that of his friends will look for him in vain. But this very thought of the brevity of life suggests another reason why he should discharge his load of mental bitterness before the grave closes his mouth for ever.

Therefore will I not restrain my mouth,
I will speak in the heaviness of my spirit,
I will complain in the bitterness of my soul.

Whereupon he turns to Jahve and in a tone of passionate invective demands:—

Am I a sea or a sea monster

(i.e., one of those insurrectionary monsters that Jahve has subdued, and to which, as we have seen, Job more than once compares himself),

That thou settest a watch over me ?
 When I say my bed will comfort me,
 My couch will lighten my groaning,
 There, too, thou frightest me with dreams,
 And terrifiest me with visions,
 So that my soul chooseth strangling
 And death, as better than these bones ;
 I loathe (life),—I would not live always.
 Away from me ! for my days are but a breath.

What is man that thou esteemest him
 And on him directest thy thought,
 That thou visitest him every morning,
 And each moment spiest him out ?
 When at last wilt thou look away from me
 And let me be while I swallow my spittle ?
 If I have sin'd, what is it to thee, O spy of men ?
 Why hast thou made me a reproach unto thee,
 So that I am a burden to myself ?
 And why forgivest thou not my sins
 And overlookest mine iniquity ?
 For shortly I shall be in the dust,
 Thou wilt seek me, but I shall be no more.

It would be difficult to find in any of the free-thought dramas language bolder or more full of the indignation of unmerited human suffering than these fierce utterances of Job. For the time being his standpoint resembles that of Prometheus in his defiance of Zeus, nor are the strength and fervency of his language at all inferior to those of the Titan. We are reminded of the Goethean Prometheus and his demands in the interest of human justice.

Ich dich ehren ? Wofür ?
 Hast du die Schmerzen gelindert
 Ie des Beladenen ?
 Hast du die Thränen gestillet
 Ie des Geängsteten, etc., etc.

To Job's passionate feeling Jahve has become the source of injustice, of arbitrary and ignoble dealing, of extreme harshness and cruelty. Those very attributes which lay at the root of Jewish conceptions of Jahve, and which are most insisted on by his friends in their animadversions, are perverted by Job to cruel, tyrannical qualities, and to unscrupulous attacks on himself. Thus the idea of Providence, of an omniscient, all-pervading sovereignty over human affairs, is interpreted as a mean system of malicious espionage. Not only is Jahve a tyrant, but he is a suspicious and petty tyrant. Like some inhuman Nero or Dionusius of Syracuse, he is for ever on the watch for unguarded words or acts in order to torture and punish their authors. Job wishes this close inspection of him would cease for even the brief seconds needed to swallow his spittle. Nor is this all; he adopts a perverted view of the divine omnipotence. For granting that he has sinned against this spy of humanity, why cannot he, instead of being so eager to punish, altogether forgive him, especially as he is shortly doomed in the course of nature to die, when all such possible benefits will be possible no more?

On the cessation of this outspoken invective, Bildad, his second friend, takes up the argument against him.

He compares Job's words to the rude bluster of a strong wind, but he clearly discerns their import.

Doth then Jahve pervert righteousness;
Doth the Almighty falsify justice?

is his indignant demand. He reiterates, however, the old argument. Had Job's life been just and pure Jahve would doubtless have continued him in his prosperity. This conclusion is based upon the traditions of the fathers. These all unite in testifying that evil men perish as speedily as the papyrus and bulrush when their moisture becomes dried up. The wicked cannot stand before the combined power and justice of Jahve.

In reply, Job is quite prepared to acknowledge the omnipotence of Jahve, just as ready as Prometheus is to allow the power of Zeus, nay more, Job is willing to suggest instances of it in Nature.

He removeth the mountains without warning;
He overturneth them in his anger.

He maketh the earth bound from its place,
 So that its pillars are shaken.
 He commandeth the sun that it shine not ;
 On the stars he placeth his seal ;
 Above he spreadeth the heaven as a tent ;
 And walketh on the tops of the waves.
 He made the Great Bear, the Giant, the Pleiades,
 And the hidden chambers of the South.
 He doeth wonders that are unsearchable,
 And marvels that cannot be numbered.

But it is precisely this overmastering supremacy of Jahve that constitutes in part Job's grievance. For who can say unto God—What doest thou ?

God doth not restrain his anger—
 Unto him bow the helpers of the Dragon.
 How then should I reply to him,
 How choose out my words against him ?
 Were I to call and he answered,
 I would not believe that he heard my voice.
 He who attacks me with his tempest
 Increaseth my wounds without cause.
 He will not let me even take breath,
 But filleth me with bitterness.

With this oppressive sense of Jahve's greatness, his own merit or demerit appears to Job an unimportant matter. He has no power to assert the former or to defend himself from the imputation of the latter. The Divine power seems to him to make no clear distinction between good and evil. God annihilates equally the innocent and the guilty.

When a scourge slays unexpectedly
 He mocks at the despair of the guiltless.

This, according to Job, is the general character of the government of the earth.

The earth is given up to the hands of the wicked ;
 He veils the faces of their judges,
 If not, where and who is he ?

I am afraid of all my troubles—
 I know thou wilt not hold me guiltless,
 I am already (or beforehand) condemned,
 Why then need I trouble in vain ?
 Were I to bathe myself in snow,

And purify my hands with soap,
Then wouldst thou plunge me in a ditch,
So that my garments made me defiled.
He is not as I—a man to be answered,
And that we should come together in judgment;
There is no arbiter between us
Who may lay hand upon us both.

In view of the general character of Hebrew religionism the freedom of these utterances is very remarkable. In his extreme indignation and his overpowering sense of helplessness, Job is inclined to attach unscrupulousness as a consequence of the divine attribute of omnipotence. In bitter irony he says in effect: If God is so all-powerful what use is it for me to protest my innocence? His omnipotence is equal to the task of making me guilty whether I am so or not. The idea here is not that found in other parts of Scripture, that the Divine omniscience so much exceeds human self-knowledge that God might possibly find a man guilty even though his conscience pronounced him innocent. Job rather contemplates an immoral use of almighty and irresponsible power. For the time being he is so cowed and crushed by his consciousness of God's supremacy and his own utter helplessness that the Divine government presents itself to him in the light of a tyrannical despotism against which it is useless to contend. We may note in passing that the development of this germ-thought may be found in every system of theological fatalism. Whenever Divine power has been so exaggerated as to leave no room for human free-will, for individual independence, for ethical assertion, the results assumes the character of Job's complaint.

I am beforehand condemned,
Why then trouble myself in vain?

Job is so prostrated and benumbed by Jahve's oppression that, as he says, he cannot utter, as he otherwise might, his complaint—though it is hard to see how he could exercise greater freedom of speech than he actually does. He is like a cowed child with the instrument of punishment—like a sword of Damokles—hanging over him, and ever ready to fall, so he says:—

Let him remove his rod from me,
Let his terrors cease to pursue me,
Then would I address him without fear,
For in myself I am not thus (fearful).

The abject terror which Job feels has its source in external circumstances. Jahve has adopted unjust means of compelling Job to feel his guilt, but as yet without success. As he is tired of life and reckless as to his fate, he will disclose all the bitterness of his heart.

Do not condemn me so soon,
 Make me know why thou pursuest me ;
 Dost thou delight in oppression,
 In condemning the work of thy hands,
 While thou givest light to the counsel of the evil ?

It would almost seem, remarks Job sarcastically, that Jahve's attributes are those of men, that he shares their vacillation and the favour they bestow on the wicked.

Hast thou then eyes of flesh,
 Or seest thou as men see ?
 Are thy days like the days of men,
 Or thy years as those of a mortal,
 That thou seekest after my guilt,
 And searchest for my sins,
 Though knowing well that I am innocent,
 And that none can free me from thy hands ?

There appears to Job a violent inconsistency in the fact that his maker should also be his destroyer. Jahve has exercised his own volition in his creation. He has moulded him after his own fashion. His plea is that of St. Paul's objector : " Why doth he yet find fault, for who hath resisted his will ? "

Thy hands in moulding have fashioned me
 Round about ; and wilt thou destroy me ?
 Remember now that as clay thou has made me,
 And wilt thou again reduce me to dust ?
 Hast thou not poured me out as milk,
 And coagulated me like a cheese ?
 Thou hast clothed me with skin and with flesh,
 Thou hast intertwined me with bone and with nerves,
 Life and favour hast thou granted me,
 Thy care hath preserved my life.

But this Providence which Job thus acknowledges was, in his opinion, purposely contrived for sinister and treacherous objects. Jahve has with secret malice been nursing him for the day of adversity. He has always clandestinely cherished the intention of blasting his happiness. In other words, Job brings the divine

foreknowledge to bear directly on his calamities, and interprets what seems to him to be its action in a grossly anthropomorphic manner.

And yet this is what thou hid'st in thy heart !
I know that this was thy mind ;
When I sin thou would'st deal harshly
And from my guilt would'st not free me.
Were I unrighteous then woe unto me ;
If just, shall I not lift up my head
Though full of shame and seeing but my disgrace ?
And if I lift it, thou huntest me as a fierce lion,
Thou showest again thy marvels against me,
Thou bringest new witnesses to oppose me,
Thou increasest thy spite upon me,
(Thou bringest) changes of foes against me.

Once more Job refers to the initial injustice of his birth and existence.

Why took'st thou me out of my mother's womb ?
Else had I died, and no eye had seen me,
So I should have been as though I had not been ;
I should have been carried from the womb to the tomb.
Are not my days nothingness ? Away !
Leave me that I may rejoice a little
Ere I depart whence I cannot return,
To the land of gloom and of horror—
The land of darkness and of midnight—
Of obscurity and of chaos
Whose brightness is the darkness of night.

Zophar, the third interlocutor, now takes up the ungrateful task of reasoning with Job. He does so with some increase of vehemence. He demands whether men are to be silenced by Job's falsehoods, and put down by his mockery. Job has loudly protested his own righteousness, but Zophar wishes that Jahve himself would answer him. The divine wisdom transcends infinitely all human knowledge. He propounds the perennial question of God's unsearchableness—as unanswerable to-day as when it was first mooted.

Canst thou reach the depths of God,
Or attain to the height of the Almighty ?¹

¹ The phrase here rendered "height" (אֶם עֲדֵתְכָלִית) implies also "to the extremity of perfection". The words are noteworthy from

High as heaven, what canst thou do?
 Deeper than hell, what dost thou know?
 Its measure is longer than the earth
 And broader than the sea.

But in harmony with his transcendent wisdom is Jahve's judgment of humanity—it is far beyond all human estimate, so that he has exacted of Job less retribution than he deserved. Whatever God does, there is no one who dare call him to account.¹ Not only does he know the sinful, but he discerns crime where no one suspects it. His discipline is instructive.

So is a vain man readily taught,
 And the wild ass is born anew as man.¹

Zophar, like Job's other friends, advocates repentance. Job must have discovered by this time that he cannot deceive God. If he consents to put away his wickedness, Zophar promises him a return of his former prosperity. As may be supposed, Job is not much consoled by this re-assertion of his guilt. He has now heard his three friends, and finds their counsel uniformly fallacious. They have merely given utterance to the old dogmatic platitudes, and have not really touched his own actual experience. The riddle he wants solved remains precisely where it was, notwithstanding their assumption of superior wisdom who undertook its solution. Besides, their reasoning is based on falsehood. Accordingly Job replies to his three comforters in a strain of bitter irony.

No doubt ye are the people
 And wisdom shall die with you,
 But I have a head as well as you;
 I am not inferior to yourselves,
 Yea, who knows not such things as these?

He is not only disdainful, he is indignant. He considers that he has been mocked by his friends. Their advice he treats with

the point of view which regards Job, as a knowledge-drama, as showing the passionate eagerness of truth search therein spoken of or commended. Nor is this by any means the only place where such a description of truth search and its true nature is found. Comp., *e.g.*, chap. xxviii.

¹ These words may however have the sense of ridiculing man's hasty wisdom, especially taken in connection with his native inability to acquire perfect wisdom.

the same asperity as Prometheus did the counsel of Okeanos; indeed, his rejection of it is couched in the same language.¹ He remarks that the unfortunate are always an object of contempt to the prosperous.

“For misfortune contempt” is the rule of the lucky,
It waits upon those whose feet totter.

He carries his bitter humour further, for he alleges that evil-doers are blessed by God with peace and prosperity.

The wild robbers have peaceful tents,
And they who disquiet the Most High have security,
Who carry their God in their hand.

As to Zophar’s exposition of natural theology, that is everywhere acknowledged. The beasts of the field, the birds of heaven, the earth, the fishes, all testify to the Creator’s wisdom and power. But in Job’s own recapitulation of the argument there still lurks the assumption that the Divine Omnipotence may prove immoral.

With him is strength and wisdom,
His are the deceived and deceiver;
Senators he makes captives,
And turns judges into fools.
He looseth the belt of kings,
And fasteneth a girdle on their loins.

He removeth understanding from the chiefs of the earth,
And maketh them lose themselves in a pathless desert.
They grope without light in darkness,
He maketh them reel like a drunkard.
Mine eye hath seen all this,
Mine ear hath understood and caught it,
As much as ye know, I know also,
I am not inferior to you.

In other words, he argues that the divine power is manifested by inducing confusion and a complete inversion of the normal order of things. He thereupon vents his anger on friends who have only stale platitudes to offer. He calls them liars and useless physicians. He wishes they had manifested their wisdom by keeping silence. He desires to know whether their unjust pleas and their falsehoods are proffered for God, and suggests

¹ Comp. *Prometheus Vincetus*, ed. Blomfield, line 271-3.

that in that case God would not approve their advocacy nor the respect of persons adopted in favour of himself. Once more he bids them let him alone to indulge his plaint without contradiction; Jahve himself may do his worst.

Let me alone that I may speak,
And let happen to me what will.
Whatever befalls, I take my flesh in my teeth,
And put my life in my hand;
Though he slay me, I care not,
But I will maintain my ways before him.

In this invincible consciousness of rectitude, and, as a result of this feeling, his indifference to the worst fate that can befall him, Job, like Prometheus in similar circumstances, finds ground for self-satisfaction. For the same reason, he is quite prepared to argue his cause with Jahve, for, as he suggests, no ungodly man would dare to appear before him. He is the more ready to discuss the issue because he is persuaded that Jahve, however secretly and indirectly, is nevertheless ranged on his side.

See now, I have set in order my suit,
I know that I shall be justified.

All that he asks for is that Jahve would so far mitigate his sufferings as to allow him strength to make his plea. That granted, he does not care whether Jahve or himself takes the part of plaintiff and defendant. He complains that his adversary, for so he ostensibly regards Jahve, has hid his cause from him. He demands the reason of this.

How many sins and transgressions have I?
My offences and iniquities make me to know.

For what cause, in other words, has Jahve made Job his enemy, and such a weak, puny, unworthy foe?

Wilt thou terrify a wind-blown leaf?
Wilt thou persecute a dried straw?
That thou inditest against me bitter things,
And mak'st me to inherit the sins of my youth.

I.e., Jahve must have made his indictment depend on sins committed at so early an age that Job was unconscious of them.¹ Nor is this all that Job has to allege against Jahve's injustice.

¹ Compare Renan's translation, p. 56.

He has encased his feet in fetters, and afterwards scrutinises his steps as if there were no impediment to their free motion, and this malicious power is directed against a mere infirm, rotten thing, as a garment half devoured by moths.

This thought again suggests the old theme of the vanity and uncertainty of human life.

Man born of woman
Is brief in time and full of sorrow ;
Like a flower in bloom is he cut down,
Like a shadow he fleeth and stayeth not.
On such an one dost thou sharpen thy gaze,
And bringest me unto judgment with thee.
Who can bring clean out of unclean ? No one.
When his days are already determined,
And his months are numbered with thee,
Thou hast set him bounds which he cannot pass.

Take thine eyes off that he may rest,
Till he joy like the hireling in the close of his day.

The combined vanity and brevity of life are such that man is inferior even to trees.

For to a tree there is some hope,
If it be cut down it will resprout,
And its tender shoot will not cease,
Though its root grow old in the earth,
And its stock die away in the ground ;
By the scent of water will it rebud,
And put forth shoots like a plant.

But man dieth and cometh to nought,
Yea, man expireth and where is he ?
As the waters disappear from the sea,
And the stream faileth and drieth up,
So man lieth down and riseth not.
They will not awake—while the heavens last
They shall not be raised from their sleep.

Oh that thou would'st hide me in the grave,
That thou would'st cover me till thy wrath be turned,
That thou would'st fix me a term and remember me !

If a man die, shall he live again ?
All the time of my servitude will I hope,
Till my deliverance come.

In which words we have one of those occasional expressions of trust in the future which alternate—as in the parallel case of Prometheus—with the feelings of despair suggested by the present. In the case of the Greek Titan the feeling is prompted partly on his own foresight of his future destiny, partly on his invincible persuasion of the final supremacy of justice, while in that of Job, though the latter consideration is by no means forgotten, his chief basis of hope is his personal trust and faith in Jahve as the righteous judge of the earth. It is this perpetually recurrent though oft obscured conviction which gives such a Hebrew and religious colouring to the doubt of Job, and makes him the perennial type of men who combine with religious skepticism and extreme freedom of utterance a firm and invincible confidence in God. Job is thus persuaded that Jahve will yet visit him at some future time.

Thou wilt call and I will answer ;
Thou wilt yearn to the work of thy hands.

But this feeling finds for the time only momentary expression. The future with its possibilities cannot annihilate the present ; indeed, Job seems so far to generalise from his own particular example and his despondent mood that the hope of man seems to share the destruction which so often attends the processes of Nature. Thus the mountain falling by successive landslips disappears. The rock is removed out of its place. Waters wear away stones. Floods carry off the soil of the river-beds.

So destroyest thou the hope of man ;
Thou assail'st him always and he disappears ;
Thou changest his visage and sendest him hence.

This concentration on one man of God's visitations has of necessity an individual, almost a selfish aspect.

His sons are honoured—he knoweth it not ;
They are dishonoured—he perceiveth it not ;
Only his own body gives him pain,
His own spirit causeth him anguish.

At this point there is a natural break in the structure of the book. Job has in his opening speech laid out his cause against Jahve. His three friends have one by one taken up Jahve's defence, and to each of their pleas Job has replied. In the next

division of the book, comprising chapters fifteen to twenty-one, we have a repetition of this, which we might term the simple ground-plan of the book. Again do his friends take up their parable against him, and once more are their reproaches followed in each case by Job's answer and self-defence. Most commentators have remarked on the forcible contrast between the variety and profundity of Job's utterances and the monotonous character of his friends' attacks. We almost seem to have foreshadowed the depth and versatility which result from a free standpoint like that of Job's, compared with the sameness which must necessarily characterise speculation based on and limited by prescribed belief. While his friends ring the changes on their old themes of human demerit proved by suffering—the powerlessness of men to contend with Jahve—the need of submissive silence for down-trodden humanity, Job's invective against Jahve on the one hand and his friends on the other is marked continually by rapid and novel turns of thought, feeling, and illustration.

Eliphaz reiterates his former argument as to Job's impiety. All human tradition is against him as to the invariable connection of sin with suffering. In forsaking this tradition of the elders he approves himself a Neologian, a despiser of aged men and ancient lore. He demands sarcastically :—

Art thou the first man that wast born,
Or wast thou made before the hills ?
Hast thou shared God's secret counsel ?
Hast thou drawn to thyself all wisdom ?
What knowest thou and we know it not ?
What understandest thou and it is hid from us ?
With us are the grey-headed, the aged ;
Men richer in years than thy father.

He again asserts his former complaint that Job is speaking against God, and once more urges that suffering is the exclusive destiny of the wicked.

Job is more impatient than ever at the reiterated accusations of his friends. He is tired of hearing the old theme once more treated from the old point of view. Hence he begins his reply.

Many such things have I heard.
Wretched consolers are ye all.

He retorts the irony of Eliphaz.

I too could speak as ye do ;
If ye were in my place
I could array words against you,
I could shake my head at you.

He protests, however, that he would not act thus towards his friends were they placed in his circumstances. Rather would he endeavour to strengthen them. As the case stands, his friends' pretended comfort has been to him an additional source of weakness and provocation. This also he attributes to Jahve, who has set them at him.

They open their mouth to devour me,
They smite me shamefully upon the cheeks,
They gather themselves together against me,
God hath abandoned me to the evil.
He hath thrown me into the hands of the wicked.

And yet there are no iniquities in my hand,
My prayer also is pure.

Quite in the spirit of the Greek Titan, Job appeals to Earth to testify to the injustice from which he suffers.

O Earth, hide not thou my blood,
So that there be no place for my cry for vengeance !

He still hopes that Jahve himself will be his avenger.

Yet even now is my witness in heaven,
And my avenger on the high places.
Though my friends deride me,
Mine eye sheddeth tears to God,
That he would vindicate a man before God,
And a son of man before his neighbour.

The present necessity of some such vindication before he departs hence suggests to Job another lamentation for the shortness of life. In words like those of Hamlet he speaks of the bourne whence no traveller returns. Reverting to his miscalled friends, he calls them mockers and without understanding. He contrasts their conduct with that of the upright and innocent. They would have been astonished at Job's trouble.

The innocent will stir against the hypocrite,
The righteous will cleave to his way,
And the pure of hands will grow in strength.

"But as for you," he continues, addressing his friends, "do ye return, for I cannot find one wise man among you."

Bildad next takes up his plea against Job. He begins by resenting his disdain of himself and his fellow-comforters. He asks :—

Why are we counted as beasts,
And reckoned impure in thy sight ?

He compares Job to a wild beast caged or netted, which tears itself in its fury. He puts the taunting question :—

Shall the earth be laid waste on thy account ?
Shall the rock be removed out of its place ?

Once more he brings forward the well-worn theme of the sufferings of the wicked, with, however, a more direct allusion to the particular fate of Job, *e.g.*,

He hath neither son nor descendant in his tribe,
Nor any survivor in his house.

More vehement than ever is Job's answer.

How long will ye distress my soul,
And rend me in pieces with your words ?
Ten times already have ye insulted me,
Shamelessly have ye hardened yourselves against me.

Nor is their behaviour justified by their theory of his sin.

And be it so ; grant that I have sinned,
My transgression abideth with me.
If ye certify against me my shame,
And urge against me my reproach,
Know then—it is God who hath oppressed me,
And hath compassed me with his net.
I protest against the violence—no one answereth.
I make my appeal—no one gives me justice.
He hath hedged round my way impassably,
He hath spread darkness about my path.
He hath stripp'd me of my glory,
And removed the crown from my head.

He continues his protest against Jahve, whom he charges with treating him as an enemy. The Hosts of God are besieging his tent. His condition seems isolated and forlorn. Brothers, friends, neighbours, have forsaken him. He has become strange to those who were his servants, indifferent to his wife, rejected

by his children. The only thing left him is his life, and nothing can be more frail than his tenure of that.

My bones cleave to my skin as though (they were) flesh,
I am escaped by the skin of my teeth.

So penetrated is he with his forsaken condition, with the pressure of his many woes, as well as with the feeling that it is God himself who is the real agent in his misfortunes, that in a moment of passionate yearning he is led to implore the sympathy even of those friends who have dealt so hardly with him.

Pity me ! pity me ! O my friends,
For the hand of God hath stricken me.
Why do ye persecute me as God,
And refuse to be satisfied with my flesh ?
Would that my words were written,
That they were printed in a book,
That they were graven with an iron pen and with lead,
That they were sculptured in the rock for ever.

This wish forms the prelude to the strongest asseveration which the book contains of Job's confidence that justice will ultimately be done to him, though he may not live to see it.

For I know that my avenger liveth,
And a survivor will rise from the dust ;
And after men have devoured my body
Yet out of my flesh shall I see God,
Whom I shall see for myself.
Mine eyes shall behold him, not those of another,
My veins within me are consumed with desire.
Then will ye say : Why persecute we him ?
For the root of the matter will be found in me ;
Then be ye afraid of the sword,
For fiery are the punishments of the sword,
Whereby he shall know the Almighty.

Job's expectation of a particular *goel*, or avenger, who should vindicate his character and his cause, forms a curious parallelism to the similar anticipation of Prometheus, though with the characteristic difference that the hope of the latter seems based on the Hellenic notion of fate regarded as a rectifier of injustice, while Job's expectation is grounded on the Hebrew notion of a ruling Providence—a personal embodiment of absolute justice—which sooner or later arranges equitably all terrestrial affairs.

Prometheus is further sustained by the feeling that he is immortal, while Job is also supported by a vague persuasion of some kind of consciousness after death.

The answer of Zophar pursues the same line of thought as the pleas of his friends. He once more urges the troubles of the wicked and the evanescent character of their prosperity. Indirectly he accuses Job of robbery and cruel oppression. Thus only can he account for his sudden fall from prosperity into the depths of adversity.

In the fulness of his plenty shall he suffer want,
Every blow of misfortune shall strike him.

By this time Job has been goaded by his friends to such a pass that he is tempted to deny any ruling Providence in human existence. The defect of justice which he sees so forcibly exemplified in his own case, he now perceives to mark generally God's dealings with men. It is evident, Job thinks, that Jahve either approves the course of the wicked by granting them prosperity, or that he allows a man's fate to be quite independent of his merits or demerits. Under either hypothesis, his friends have been pleading falsely. Job anticipates their surprise, and expresses his own dread at the daring character of the utterances which his friends' falsehood and his own sufferings extort from him.

Mark me and be stupefied,
And lay your hand on your mouth ;
When I think of it I tremble,
And my flesh is seized with horror.

How happens it that the wicked live ;
That they grow old and increase in strength ?
Their children continue prospering around them ;
Their offspring under their eyes.
Their houses are free from fear,
And the rod of God resteth not on them.
Their bull gendereth without fail ;
Their cow calveth without abortion.
They send forth their offspring like a flock ;
Their children dance around them.
They play on the timbrel and harp,
And rejoice in the sound of the psaltery.
They pass all their days in mirth ;

They descend in a moment into their graves,
 And they say to God: "Away from us,
 We desire not the knowledge of thy ways.
 Who is the Almighty that we should serve him?
 And what are we better for praying to him?"
 Is not their happiness in their hand?
 (Such counsel of the wicked be far from me.)

If the next five verses are genuine (xxii., 17-22), they indicate a sudden transition into the opposite or traditional mode of thought, and adopt the plea of his friends. The prosperity of the wicked is of brief duration, and sooner or later God punishes them. The book offers other examples of such rapid transition—indeed, it is in harmony with Job's emotional mobility, his extreme sensibility, and his continual vacillation between one idea or standpoint and another; but few are so abrupt and self-contradictory as this.¹ His own standpoint is again taken up in verse 22.

Can any teach God knowledge,
 Seeing he judgeth the mighty?
 This man dieth in the height of his well-being,
 Perfectly tranquil and happy:
 His milk-troughs are full of milk;
 His bones are well moistened with marrow.
 That man dieth in bitterness of soul,
 Not having partaken of pleasure.
 They lie down together in the dust,
 And the worms cover both (alike).

Job proceeds to apply this estimate of Providence to his own case.

Behold, I know your thoughts,
 And the schemes ye devise against me.
 Ye say: "Where is the house of the tyrant,
 And the tent where the wicked inhabit?
 Have ye not asked of the passers-by?
 And their tokens (opinions) do ye not know—
 That in the day of trial, the wicked shall be spared—
 The day when floods of wrath are brought forth?
 Who will declare his way to his face?"

¹ Ewald takes the passage as intended to contrast forcibly with Job's usual sentiment. Renan interprets it as ironical. It is one of the many passages which make the Book of Job the most difficult of all the Old Testament for consistent interpretation.

And who shall repay him what he hath done ?
Yet shall he be carried to the grave,
And on his monument shall he keep watch
(*i.e.*, like a statue).

Sweet unto him are the clods of the valley ;
While after him all people draw,
And before him are they without number."

How, then, do ye console me in vain,
Seeing that the basis of your answers is falsehood ?

The foregoing passage must be held to express the extreme depth of Job's skepticism—his most daring profession of unbelief in the old Jewish theory of retribution. So far from being well affected to the righteous and blessing them with prosperity, it would seem that Jahve's affections are altogether of a contrary kind and are concentrated on the wicked, at least that he regards both good and evil with the supremest indifference.

In his reply Eliphaz seems to concede something to Job's novel view of deity, for he grants that man's integrity and perfection are of no service to God.

Can a man be profitable to God ?
No ! The wise profits but himself.
What matters it to the Almighty that thou art just ?
What doth he gain that thou makest thy way perfect ?
Will he punish thee for fear ;
And will he enter with thee into judgment ?

His increased irritation against Job is shown by his making his accusations of impiety more personal and direct. Hitherto the charges of himself and his fellow-friends have mostly been general. The assumed proof of Job's guilt has been recognised as indirect and circumstantial. Job is punished by God, and therefore must have sinned against him in some way or other. Now, however, Job's indictment is drawn out explicitly. It is no longer inferential. What it lacked in directness is supplied by Job's obstinate profession of his innocence, and his invective against Jahve. It is only the bold sinner against God who could thus launch out against his injustice. Accordingly Eliphaz makes Job's impeachment more definite. It is clear, he says, that Job's evil is great, and his iniquities numberless. He has, for example, taken a pledge for nought, has stripped clothes from the naked. He has not given drink to the thirsty nor bread to the

hungry. He has allowed the mighty to tyrannise over the earth. He has sent widows away empty, and the arms of the orphans were broken.

Therefore hath sorrows surrounded thee,
And thou art troubled by sudden terrors.

In a passage already quoted he accuses Job of wishing to rival the Titanism of the giants before the flood—those types of impious ambition to the Jews, as the brood of Titans were to the pious Hellenes.

He ends by exhorting Job to return from his evil ways, promising that if he does so, he will experience a renewal of his former prosperity, thus concluding his friendly advice with the precise plea with which he began it in chap. iv.

From this point onwards (with the exception of a few words of Bildad, chap. xxv.) the indictment of Job's friends ceases. The case for the prosecution, so it may be called, is completed, and Job is left to continue his defence until Jahve himself sums up the cause, and awards the final verdict.

Disgusted at last with what he considers the complete want of sympathy with his friends, Job appeals definitively to Jahve, or, rather, he wishes for those conditions and relations which would render such an appeal effectual.

Oh that I knew where to find him,
That I might come even to his judgment-seat !
I would arrange my cause before him,
And would fill my mouth with arguments.
I would know what answer he would give me,
And mark what he would say to me.
Would he urge against me his mighty power ?
No ; but he would attend to me.
Then a righteous man might dispute with him,
So I should be delivered for ever from my accuser.

Such a wish is, however, vain. Job cannot find Jahve in the sense of coming into personal contact with him. He is neither forward nor backward, neither on the right hand nor on the left. Nevertheless he knoweth Job's way.

He knoweth the way that is with me :
When he proves me, I shall come forth as gold.
My foot hath always kept his steps ;

His way have I held without deviation.
I have not strayed from the precepts of his lips ;
More than my portion I have kept his word.

But again the thought occurs, what use is Job's conscious innocence against the omnipotent and irresponsible might of Jahve ?

But he is alone ; who can turn him ?
What his soul desireth, that he doth.
Yea, he will fulfil my destiny :
And many such (fates) are with him.
Wherefore I am terrified before his face ;
When I consider, I tremble before him.

Again does Job resume his attack on Jahve on the ground of unfairness to men. If God foresees all human times and fates, why should not men who claim to know him have also some insight into the divine times and ways ? That they have not that insight, however much they may suppose they possess it, Job has proved by bitter experience. He again reverts to that perennial enigma from his own standpoint—the prosperity of the wicked.

Some remove the landmarks ;
They rob men of their flocks and feed them ;
They drive away the ass of the orphans ;
They take in pledge the cow of the widow.

And so he proceeds with a long enumeration of ill-doings, mostly acts of oppression and violence towards the poor and helpless. Of these robbers, some work by day, others are enemies of the light and prowl about by night. No doubt ultimately the wicked and violent come to an end, but rather by the course of Nature than by any active agency of Jahve. Job concludes his speech by demanding—turning probably to his friends—who will convict him of falsehood.

His challenge is only partly accepted. Bildad attempts to reply by a restatement of the oft-employed plea of himself and his fellow-comforters—that Jahve is omnipotent, and that no mortal dare contend or even reason with him. But Job repels the solution with scorn. He turns upon Bildad and answers him from his own reasoning. Be it that man is weak and erring—

How hast thou holpen the weak,
 And sustained the powerless arm ?
 How hast thou informed the unwise,
 And plentifully manifested thy knowledge ?
 To whom hast thou taught words,
 And whose breath went forth from thee ?

The omnipotence of Jahve Job again concedes, as he has often done already. (It is with the common application of that truth to human affairs that he is dissatisfied.) He alludes to the victory Jahve has obtained over the giants of yore, who, like the Titans against Zeus, rose in insurrection against him.

The giants tremble
 Beneath the waters and its inhabitants ;
 Hell is uncovered before him,
 And the abyss is unveiled.
 He extendeth the north over the void,
 And hangeth the earth over nothingness.
 He encloseth waters in the clouds,
 And the cloud is not rent under them.
 He covereth the face of his throne
 While he spreads his cloud before it.
 He hath determined a bound for the waters
 At the end of the light ; with the darkness
 The pillars of heaven tremble
 And are alarmed at his threatening.
 By his might he maketh the sea quake ;
 By his wisdom he slew the dragon.
 His breath maketh the heaven pure ;
 His hand hath pierced through the flying serpent.
 Lo ! these are parts of his works,
 But how small a portion is heard of him !
 Who then can understand the thunder of his presence ?

An abrupt but not unusual turn of thought leads Job to consider his own relation to this omnipotence. He is ready to testify his integrity before Jahve with an oath, although he knows he has treated him unjustly.

While my breath remaineth in me
 And the spirit of God in my nostrils,
 My lips shall not speak iniquity,
 My tongue shall not utter falsehood.
 God forbid that I should justify you,
 Till death I will not renounce my integrity ;

My righteousness I cleave to and will not let it go,
My conscience shall not prick me as long as I live.
(No) let mine enemies be considered guilty
And mine adversaries as the sinner.

Perhaps it is the recollection of his enemies' shortcomings that prompts the invective which follows. Job is thus led to speak of the hope of the hypocrite and the uncertainty of the prosperity of the wicked. Somewhat inconsistently (with reference to his general tone of thought) he thus turns the tables against his consolers. They, assuming Job's guilt, have been hurling against him the divine judgments. Job, on the other hand, inferring their iniquity from their falsehood, threatens them with the same fate.

We have now seen enough of Job's character to be able to form a not unfair estimate of it. He is not only a deeply religious, but he is an intellectual and truthful man. He is a born natural philosopher, who has explored for himself every available department of human knowledge. He brings his reasoning faculties to bear without fear or reserve upon the operations of Providence in the world. Although no longer a firm believer in the old Jewish doctrines of special providence and divine retribution—which he regards as falsified by his own experience—he still retains his faith in Jahve as the creator and governor of the universe. His change of doctrinal position, like the development of Judaism as a whole, has imparted a wider view of the divine dealings. Man and his interests have become less in a conspectus of the divine rule which embraces the whole creation. But these questions of theology are not the sole objects of Job's attention and his inquiring research. He has also investigated the other and more secular departments of human knowledge, as it existed in his time. He has paid attention, for example, to mining—a branch of human science then especially in advance. He has studied methods of warfare and husbandry—the arts of war and peace. He has investigated the habits and faculties of wild beasts, the manners and customs of various races of men. He speaks of great buildings and statues. He expresses all that was then known of astronomy, earthquakes, eclipses, floods, landslips, etc. In a word, Job is a genuine truth-seeker—a man who has bent all his powers to the investi-

gation of knowledge, whether human or divine. This capacity for research is proved by many of his utterances already quoted. But the passage which especially exemplifies this tendency and reveals Job as a genuine wisdom- or truth-seeker is the twenty-eighth chapter, which we may moreover take as the last word not only of Hebrew skepticism but of all wise human inquiry whatsoever.

Surely there is a mine for the silver,
 And a place for gold where they smelt it ;
 Iron is taken from the dust,
 And brass molten from stone.
 Man has put a limit to darkness,
 He searcheth out all profundity—
 The stones hidden in the shades of death.
 He bridges the shaft, far from human dwellings ;
 There hang suspended the forsaken of their feet,
 Far from the haunts of men.
 The earth whence cometh forth bread
 Is inside disturbed as if by fire ;
 The stones of it are the place of sapphires—
 There is found dust of gold.
 No bird knoweth the path thereto ;
 The vulture's eye hath never perceived it.
 The fierce beasts have not trodden it ;
 The lion hath left no tracks on it.
 Man putteth forth his hands to the flint—
 He overturneth the mountains by the roots ;
 He cutteth out rivers among the rocks,
 And his eye beholdeth every treasure.
 But wisdom—where shall that be found ?
 Where is the place of understanding ?
 No man knoweth its worth,
 Nor is it to be found in the land of the living.
 The depth saith—It is not in me ;
 And the sea saith—It is not in me.
 It cannot be bought for gold,
 Nor shall silver be weighed for its price ;
 It cannot be weighed against the gold of Ophir,
 Or with the precious onyx, or the sapphire ;
 Gold and crystal cannot equal it ;
 It cannot be exchanged for vessels of fine gold.
 Crystals shall not be named with it, nor coral ;
 For the price of wisdom excels rubies.
 The topaz of Cush comes not near it ;

Neither shall it be valued for pure gold.
Whence then cometh wisdom ?
And where is the abode of understanding ?
It is hid from the eyes of all living,
And veiled from the fowls of the air.
Destruction and death say :—
We have only heard its fame with our ears ;
God understandeth the way thereto,
And he knoweth the abode thereof ;
For he looketh to the ends of the earth—
And seeth under the whole heaven,
To mete the winds in his balance.
And he weigheth the waters by measure,
When he gave a law to the rain,
And a path for the thunder-flash,
Then did he see and declare it ;
He prepared and searched it out.
And unto man he said :—
The Fear of the Lord is wisdom,
And to flee evil is understanding.

Among other characteristics of this compendium of Hebrew philosophy, we may remark that Job lays especial stress on those aspects of human knowledge and enterprise which exhibit the greatest boldness—precisely those physical qualities which were nearest akin to his own mental fearlessness. In mining was displayed not only man's power and intelligence but also his dominion over nature. Here, therefore, if anywhere, might be expected the discovery of the highest wisdom, of supreme absolute truth. But, alas ! this is not to be found, neither in man nor in any other domain of nature. Its abode must therefore be with God, who gave a law to the rain and a path to the lightning. Is man therefore altogether without truth and wisdom ? Job answers : No ! man has practical wisdom still left. The fear of the Lord is wisdom, and to avoid evil is understanding. Few commentators have observed this distinction between speculative and practical truth occurring at such an early stage of human thought, and the express denial of the former to mankind. Notwithstanding all the progress which human speculation has made since the days when this Bedouin chieftain meditated on nature, humanity and God, this fact remains now as true as it was then. In other words, man cannot, from the very nature of things, attain omniscience, and must therefore be satisfied with that

sphere or law of practice which is given him in ethical duty, and which is indubitable and imperative under any and every conceivable theory of speculative truth.¹ Nor is this all that may be alleged for the high philosophic and religious standpoint of Job in this chapter; for he makes human duty here absolute, and not determined, as in his general utterances, by the favour of God manifested, *more Hebraico*, by the temporal well-being of a man.

This twenty-eighth chapter, which is really a poem in itself, may be called Job's mount of transfiguration. It is his highest altitude of philosophical religion. He relapses into his more usual mood in the next chapter. Here he recalls his days of past prosperity, and maintains that, notwithstanding the falsehoods of his friends, it was founded upon virtue. He describes the time in language of equal pathos and beauty.

When I was still in my summer days,
When the counsel of God rested on my tent,
When the Almighty was still with me,
And my children about me.

In that palmy period, when Job was revered by the poor and respected by the great, the secret of his high position was this:—

Because I delivered the poor in his crying,
The orphan who had none to help him,
I was blest by him who was ready to perish,
And I caused the widow's heart to sing for joy.
I put on righteousness as a vestment,
My judgment was a robe and crown.
I was eyes to the blind,
And feet to the lame, etc.

It was for this reason and his confidence in his rectitude and innocency that Job expected a long continuation of his prosperity.

And I said I shall die in my nest,²
And shall reckon my days as the sand.

¹ Ewald's comment on this chapter, and especially on its conclusion, is well worth reading. He sums it up thus: "Ungemein grosse Gedanken in den wenigsten Worten hingeworfen; eine Glanzstelle des ganzen Buches, und der würdigste Schluss dieses Haupttheiles sowie des ganzen menschlichen Streites"—(*Hiob*, p. 259).

² *I.e.*, like the fabled Phoenix. Compare Ewald, p. 271.

With this retrospect he contrasts his present misery. Instead of being respected by princes, he is now derided by men whose fathers he would not in former days have put on an equality with his sheep-dogs. These bushmen he describes as little better than savages, feeding on roots, and living in caves. To abjects of this sort Job has become an object of derision and insult. It does not seem quite certain whether his friends, or, rather, their ancestors, are included among these outcasts. If they are, Job's invective against them is much harsher than it is elsewhere. But here also the true object of his indictment is Jahve himself, who has delivered Job into their hands.

Thou art become cruel to me,
With thy strong hand thou settest thyself against me.

Job finally sums up his long plea in a reiteration of his innocence (chap. xxxi.) of the calumnies adduced by his friends. He wishes God would weigh him in an even balance that he might know his integrity. Moreover, he invokes all kinds of maledictions on himself if he has ever been guilty of unchastity, oppression, lying, fraud, or avarice. Among the rest, he frees himself from the charge of astrolatry.

If when I saw the sun in its splendour,
And the moon marching in brightness,
And my heart hath been secretly seduced,
Or my hand hath kissed my mouth,
This were a crime to be judged,
I should have denied God on high.

He concludes his whole pleading.

O that I had one to hear me !
Behold this is my case—Let the Almighty answer !
O that I had my adversaries' writing (indictment) !
Surely I would take it on my shoulder,
I would bind it to me as a crown.

Never, we might safely add, did a defendant go into court with cleaner hands or a more guiltless conscience than the much-enduring man of Uz.

With the thirty-first chapter ends Job's argument. The counter-pleas of his friends are also exhausted, and Job appeals to the Almighty for his verdict. This is begun in the twenty-eighth chapter (for the speech of Elihu, though quite in harmony with

the tone of the book, and possessing many interesting features and much poetic beauty of its own, is, without doubt, a later interpolation) and continued to the forty-first. We must regard this sublime exposition of what, in Job's time, were regarded as the greatest wonders of the universe, as the real *dénouement* of the drama. It is the conclusion of which the pleas of Job and his friends respectively must be taken as the two premisses—the solution of the problem indicated by Job's combined innocence and adversity. How far it is altogether satisfactory we shall see further on.

Then did Jahve answer Job, speaking out of the whirlwind, and said:—

Who is he that darkeneth counsel
By words without knowledge?
Gird up thy loins like a man,
I will question and thou shalt answer me.

Where wert thou when I laid the foundations of the world?
Tell me, if thou hast the wisdom,
Who hath set forth its dimensions, doubtless thou knowest;
Or who hath drawn over it the measuring line?
On what are its foundations sunken;
Or who hath laid its corner-stone?
When the morning stars sang together,
And all the sons of God shouted for joy.

Thereupon follows a series of sarcastic questions, founded upon the divine operations concerned in the work of creation. Jahve demands who it was that shut up the sea with doors when it came forth as if from the womb. Has Job commanded the morning and the dawn that it might seize the earth and disperse the wicked with its light? At its appearing, the aspect of the world changes as clay when impressed with a seal. It is newly enrobed as though by a garment. Evil-doers see their own light (darkness) extinguished, and the arm (of the night-marauder) lifted in pride is broken. Has Job penetrated to the sources of the sea, or walked on the floor of the great deep? Have the portals of death been revealed to him, or has he seen the gates of the nether darkness? Has he comprehended the breadth of the earth, etc.?

With these questions are interspersed ironical appeals, "Tell, since thou knowest it all," as if Job's inculcation of Jahve's

dealings with himself must have proceeded from an intimate knowledge of *all* his general operations, and thereby from an assumed omniscience. Jahve continues :—

Where is the way wherein light dwelleth,
And darkness—where is its abode ?
That thou should'st pursue it to the bound thereof,
And should'st know the paths to the house thereof.
Thou knowest it, no doubt, because thou wast already born,
The number of thy days is great.
Hast thou entered the treasure-house of the snow ?
Hast thou beheld the arsenals of the hail
Which I have stored up for the time of trouble,
For the day of battle and war ?
By what way is the light parted
Which disperseth the east-wind over the earth ?
Who hath divided a channel for the overflow of waters,
Or a path for the lightning of the thunder ;
To cause it to rain on unhabited ground,
On the wilderness, whereon no man dwelleth,
To satisfy the desolate and the waste,
To cause to spring the bud of the green herb ?
Hath the rain a father ?
Who hath begotten the drops of dew ?
Out of whose womb came the ice ?
And heaven's hoar-frost, who hath produced it ?
The waters are hardened as a stone,
And frozen is the face of the deep.
Didst thou bind the ties of the Pleiads,
Or canst thou loose the chains of the giant ?
Canst thou bring forth the twelve signs in their season,
Or lead the Great Bear with his sons ?
Knowest thou the laws of heaven ?
Canst thou order their dominion on earth ?
Canst thou lift to the clouds thy voice,
That floods of water may cover thee ?
Canst thou send lightnings, that they go ?
Do they say to thee, " Here we are " ?
Who hath put wisdom within man,
Or hath given understanding to the heart ?
Who can reckon the clouds with wisdom,
Or can incline the water-jars of heaven,
When the dust is turned to mire
And the clods cleave together ?

Leaving now the greater and more general phenomena of

nature, Jahve turns to the brute creation and shows that Job (*i.e.*, man) is equally powerless to control or guide them.

Wilt thou hunt its prey for the lion,
 Or satisfy the hunger of the young lions
 When they hide in their dens,
 Or abide in ambushade in the cover ?
 Who prepares for the raven its food
 When its young cry unto God,
 And wander without meat ?
 Knowest thou the time when the chamois bring forth,
 Or canst thou mark when the hinds calve ?
 Canst thou reckon the months they fulfil,
 Or knowest thou the time when they bear ?
 Bowing themselves, they bring forth their young,
 They free themselves from their woes ;
 Their young are strong, growing up in the field,
 They go forth and return not to them.
 Who hath given the wild ass its freedom ?
 Who hath loosed the bonds of the wild ass ?
 For which I have made the wilderness a house,
 And the barren land his dwellings.
 He disdaineth the noise of towns,
 He hears not the shouts of the driver.
 He seeks through the mountains his pasture,
 And searcheth after every green thing.

Will the buffalo be willing to serve thee ?
 Will he pass the night for thee in a stall ?
 Canst thou bind him with a cord to the furrow,
 Or will he harrow the valleys after thee ?
 Dost thou trust him for his strength is great,
 Or wilt thou leave him the care of thy works ?
 Reckonest thou on him to bring home thy seed,
 Or to gather it into thy barn ?

The wing of the ostrich beats joyously—
 Is it therefore the wing and feathers of the pious (stork) ?—
 That she leaveth her eggs in the earth,
 And lets them warm in the dust,
 And forgetteth that the foot may crush them,
 Or that the wild beast may break them.
 Hard as a stranger to her offspring,
 In vain is her labour without fear,
 Because God hath deprived her of wisdom,
 Nor hath he imparted to her understanding.
 When once she lifteth herself on high,
 She mocketh at the horse and his rider.

Gavest thou the horse his strength ?
Hast thou clothed his neck with thunder ?
Canst thou make him bound as the grasshopper ?
The glory of his nostrils is terrible,
He paweth in the valley and rejoiceth in his strength ;
He rusheth against the armed force ;
He laugheth at every fear and trembleth not ;
He turneth not back from the sword,
Upon him rattle the arrows,
The flaming spear and the lance ;
He trembles, he neighs, he devours the ground,
He cannot keep still when the trumpet soundeth ;
At the sound of the trumpet he saith : " Ha ! Ha ! "
And he scenteth the battle from far,
The thunder of the chiefs and the battle-cry.

Doth the hawk fly by thy wisdom,
And spread its wings to the south ?
Doth the eagle mount at thy word,
And build her nest on high ?
She dwells in the rock, and makes her nest
In the teeth of the rock and the strong place,
From thence she espyeth her prey,
Her eyes behold it afar off ;
Her young gorge themselves with blood,
And wherever the dead are, there is she.

Thus did Jahve answer Job and said :—
Shall he that striveth with the Almighty teach ?
He that reproveth God, let him answer it.

To this direct appeal Job replies by acknowledging his general unworthiness, as well as his inability to contend in argument with Jahve.

Behold, I am nought ; what shall I answer ?
My hand will I place on my mouth.
Once have I spoken—I will not reply ;
Yea, twice—but will not add a word more.

Jahve then proceeds with his self-defence, speaking out of the whirlwind:—

Up ! gird up thy loins like a man !
I will question, do thou give answer.
Wilt thou then despise my justice ?
Wilt thou, to clear thyself, condemn me ?
Hast thou an arm like that of God ?

Canst thou thunder with a voice like his ?
 Adorn thyself with majesty and glory ;
 Clothe thyself with grandeur and magnificence ;
 Give free course to the heat of thy wrath ;
 Humiliate the proud with a glance,
 Look on the proud and abase him ;
 Trample down the wicked in their place,
 Bury them together in the dust,
 Cover their faces in darkness ;
 Then will I in turn command thee,
 That thine own right hand can save thee.
 Behold now behemoth, which I have made as well as thee,
 He eateth grass like an ox ;
 His strength is in his thighs ;
 His power in the tendons of his body.
 He moveth his tail like a cedar ;
 The nerves of his thighs are fast-bound together ;
 His bones are tubes of iron,
 His members are bars of iron.
 He is the chief among God's works ;
 His Creator hath bestowed on him his sword.
 The mountains bear for him his pasture,
 There play all the beasts of the field ;
 He couches under the lotus leaves,
 In the coverts of the rush and the fens ;
 The lotus covereth him with their shade,
 The willows of the river surround him.
 If the flood rises he trembles not—
 He is fearless though Jordan mount up to his throat.
 Would any one seize him before his face ;
 Or trap him with nets, and bore his nose ?

Canst thou draw out leviathan with a hook ;
 Or canst thou seize his tongue with a line ?
 Canst thou put a hook through his nose ;
 Or bore through his jaws with a lance ?
 Will he make many prayers to thee ;
 Or will he speak softly to thee ?
 Will he make a bargain with thee ?
 Wilt thou make him for ever thy slave ?
 Wilt thou play with him as with a small bird ?
 Wilt thou tie him up to amuse thy maidens ?
 Will the companions make a market of him ?
 Will they divide him among the Canaanites ?
 Canst thou fill his skin with barbed irons ;
 Or his head with harpoons ?

Only place thy hand on him,
And thou wilt not think to begin the fight.
Behold, the hope of him is deceived !
Will not one be struck down at his look ?
None is so fierce as to stir him up.
Who is he then that can stand before me ?
Who hath rivalled me—I will repay him.
What is under the whole heaven is mine.

I will not pass over his limbs,
Nor his strength, nor the form of his build.
Who can lift up the hem of his garment ?
Who can come within his double bite ?
Who can open the door of his face
Round about ? his teeth are a terror.
Splendid are the scales of his shield,
As though they were close-fastened by a seal ;
One cleaves so close to another
That no air can come between ;
Each to the other they cling so fast,
Holding to each other without division.
His sneezings maketh light to shine ;
His eyes are like the eye-lids of the dawn ;
Out of his mouth go burning torches ;
Sparks of fire leap forth ;
Out of his nostrils proceeds a smoke,
As out of a boiling pot or cauldron ;
His breath kindleth coals,
Out of his throat proceedeth flame ;
In his neck abideth strength,
Before him bounds away terror.
The scales of his flesh are soldered together,
They are nailed to him and are immovable.
His heart is solid as the stone,
And hard as the nether milestone :
When he riseth the bravest tremble,
Before they are wounded they flee.
Whoso attacks him no sword holds,
Nor spear, dart, nor shield ;
He regardeth iron as straw,
And brass as rotten wood.
The arrow doth not drive him away,
Slung-stones are turned for him into stubble,
Darts are counted as stubble,
And he laughs at the rustle of the spear.
Sharp potsherds are under him,

He extendeth sharp points on the mire :
 He makes the deep boil like a cauldron,
 The sea he makes like an ointment pot.
 Behind him he makes his track to shine,
 One would think the sea were hoary.
 He hath no master upon earth,
 Created as he is to fear nothing.
 All that is lofty he beholds ;
 He is the king over all proud beasts.

This is the conclusion of Jahve's argument, and of his vindication of his omnipotence and the unsearchableness of his ways. He arrays against Job and against the assumed omniscience, on which alone the vehement invective Job has employed against himself could be reasonably based, the most awe-striking and inscrutable of the products of Nature. Job professes himself fully convinced. He says :—

I know thou canst do everything,
 And no thought of thine can be frustrated.
 Who is he that darkeneth counsel without knowledge ?
 Wherefore I have spoken what I understood not ;
 What was too marvellous for me—that which I knew not.
 Hear, I pray thee, and I will speak :
 I will ask thee, declare unto me.
 As the ear heard, so had I known thee ;
 But now mine eye hath seen thee,
 Wherefore I retract and repent
 In dust and in ashes.

It would almost seem, judging from the arguments of Jahve and from their general tone, that the final judgment on the issue would have been in favour of his friends and not of Job. To speak in the language of law courts, the judge appears to sum up "dead" against Job. This is further confirmed by the attitude of penitence and submission which Job thereafter assumes. He, it is clear, does not regard Jahve's utterances as in his favour. It is therefore not a little surprising to find that this conclusion is not borne out by the remainder of the drama. This closes with the expression of Jahve's indignation against his would-be advocates and his reiterated approval of Job's utterances concerning himself. Job himself has to make atonement for his three friends as a condition of Jahve's forgiveness of them. Hence, Job's penitence seems to be somewhat mis-

placed. Indeed, it is represented as the spontaneous outcome of his own feelings, and not as a direct requirement of Jahve. Besides, a further and final approval of Job's conduct is shown by Jahve's reinstating him in all his ancient prosperity—his flocks and herds, his children and servants being all restored to him. Thus Job dies old and happy "in his nest," as he phrased it, like the fabled phoenix rising with new life and vigour from the devouring flame of affliction.

The determination of Job's position in the *dénouement* of the drama will, however, be best arrived at by casting a glance at Jahve's speech from out of the whirlwind. This, it is evident, is the part of all others in the drama which is of most importance—just as a judge's summing up in an ordinary trial excites more general interest than the *ex parte* statements either of one side or the other. Now, while we are far from wishing to detract from the poetry and sublimity of Jahve's utterances, we may point out that its main ratiocination does not fully meet the question at issue. Job himself has never denied the Divine omnipotence nor questioned the inability of man to search out its physical operations, etc., in creation. What he is most exercised with is the common Jewish theory of providence or retribution—the action of Jahve in human affairs. According to this, the virtuous and God-fearing are happy. But Job's experience is the very reverse of this. Although he has always been virtuous, he is doomed to the greatest misery. Hitherto, notwithstanding the injunctions of his friends, Job has not been able to derive any solace from the contemplation of Jahve's almighty power. When they had urged on him this consideration, he had received it with impatience. It appeared to add to the injustice of which he professed to be conscious. If Jahve were thus almighty, why could he not ward off his evils—why could he not shield him from his calamities? Why not, even supposing he had sinned, forgive his sins? Why break such a puny human butterfly on the terrible wheel of his power and wrath.

But although not directly meeting Job's especial grievance, Jahve's argument does so suggestively and indirectly, and that in three ways.

1. By presenting in a peculiarly bold and trenchant manner

the perennial contrast between the finite and the infinite. Jahve ridicules Job's pretensions of insight into His operations by ironically dwelling on its improbability. How could the man who has seen or can see so few days on earth presume to criticise and pronounce judgment on matters that took place at the creation. This was the inconsistency which the enemies of Prometheus rebuked when they blamed him for bestowing celestial fire on "creatures of a day". Nor was the finiteness one of duration only, it was also one of extent in space. Job, with all his knowledge and his eager investigation of so many branches of human learning, could not pretend to have seen the whole measure and extent of creation. How then could he criticise merely from his own personal experience and his limited knowledge operations and laws which comprehended the whole universe in their embrace? How could he claim a knowledge of the mind and motives of that great Being beneath whose sway exist not only man and the few animals he has domesticated, but the great beasts of the forest, the wild waste, the mighty river, the boundless ocean. Not, indeed, that Jahve's position must be pronounced unanswerable from the point of view of modern thought. Thinkers like Goethe in Germany, or J. Stuart Mill in England, would retort, in the words of the former, that one need not go round the earth in order to determine whether the sky is blue. Job might not be able to subdue great sea or river monsters like behemoth and leviathan, and yet might have given a correct judgment on a question of simple duty or justice, whether as between God and man, or as between man and man. Still, with due allowance for that point of view—on which depends, indeed, Job's justification and the main motive of the drama—it does not render nugatory Jahve's position. He touches on a genuine shortcoming in Job's spirit and manner when he taunts him with claiming tacitly omniscience. So far, therefore, he is justified when he urges the inevitable limitation of human knowledge, and, as a result, the inscrutability, taking them as a whole, of the divine operations in nature and humanity.

2. For if it be granted that all the operations of nature and creation which man sees about him are inexplicable, may not a similar unsearchableness, *ex natura rerum*, pertain to God's dealings with men? If Job cannot see whence comes the rain or

determine beforehand the path of the lightning, may not a similar inability extend to others of the divine operations in which man's own welfare is more especially concerned? Might not, *e.g.*, the source of his calamities, which he ascribes entirely to the malevolent will of Jahve, be attributable to other causes, generally, or, at least, largely, operative among men. Job thus manifests that morbid excess of individuality which is the natural outcome of free and independent thought, as well as of some extreme forms of religionism. Incidentally his friends touch upon this weakness when they ironically ask in the words of Bildad:—

Shall the earth be wasted on thy account?

Shall the rock be removed out of its place?

though they do not see that the argument cuts the ground from beneath the doctrine of special providence which they have set themselves to defend. In a word, Job's standpoint, however commendable in some respects, is too narrow in its basis and selfish in its objects. His invective against Jahve is founded too conclusively upon passion as distinct from reason, upon a narrowly personal sense of injustice, not upon a wide induction and consideration of the general working of God's laws.

3. Sharing this narrowness is another phase of Job's complaint animadverted on by Jahve, *viz.*, Job has magnified too much his own human importance and position on the earth. Man, with all his superiority, suggests Jahve, is only a part of creation, and his dwellings do not quite exhaust the earth's surface. Jahve reminds Job that he comprehends the whole world under his rule, and intimates that other interests were to be considered besides those of humanity. Thus he rains on the desert place where no man is, in order to make bud the green flower-shoots. He guides the instincts of wild beasts, which live far away from the haunts of men, *e.g.*, the wild ass, which has an instinctive repugnance to the noise of towns and to the voice of a human driver. He feeds the young lions of the forest and desert, a task far beyond man's powers. He rules behemoth and leviathan, which men could not possibly do. It is not man with his petulance and vanity, but these monsters of the forest and river that are the chiefest of God's creatures. Even the descriptions of scenery in Jahve's discourse betray a preference for the wilder

aspects of nature, scenes farthest removed from man's dwelling or his influence, *e.g.*, the ostrich laying her eggs in the desert, the eagle sitting in lonely majesty on the rocky crag, the raven searching for its prey, the lion lurking in the coverts, the wild ass ranging the mountains, the behemoth in the secluded reach of some great river, shaded by lotus leaves, and half hidden by rushes and willows; leviathan, also some sea or river monster, which man can neither capture nor kill. In short, Jahve points out that there is a world of life, motion, instinct, concernment outside and away from the lesser universe of man's interests and cares, and he more than hints the superiority, in many respects, of this wilder, freer nature. In idea his words are almost an anticipation of Goethe's joyous lines, which every admirer of his will recall from the following rendering:—

On the mountains is Freedom—the breath of the tomb
 Cannot clamber their summits of health and of bloom.
 The world is perfection through all its domains,
 Where man cannot foster his cares and his pains.

They remind us also of Cicero's expression, when he enumerates among the effects of his Nature-study *Humana despicimus*. Now, while we grant the Bedouin "local colouring" no less than the philosophic breadth of this view of nature, we cannot close our eyes to the fact that it undermines that theory of special Providence held by the Jews and advocated by Job's three friends. Indeed, both this and the former plea of Jahve's dealings being inscrutable from the very breadth of their operation quite cut the ground from beneath the theory on which Judaism was based, as well as from the reasoning on which Job had founded his accusation against Jahve. In passing, we may further point out that Jahve's discourse adopts a precisely similar method of dealing with Jewish narrowness and of enlarging men's scope of the divine actions as Jesus Christ does in the Sermon on the Mount, when he says that God maketh his sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sendeth rain on the just and the unjust. Not that this doubt of the old Jewish theory is openly expressed in the Book of Job. Nowhere is the Jewish dogma, whether of special providence or of divine retribution, called expressly into question. Indeed, the conclusion of the drama and Job's restoration to his former wealth would seem in-

tended to confirm it. But certainly Jahve's answer to Job suggests forcibly considerations which if they did not quite destroy must have greatly modified the old Jewish doctrines. The man who, in the spirit of that memorable discourse, extended the operation of divine providence not only to alien peoples and nations but to the wild beasts and birds of the desert, had made a serious departure from the most characteristic of all Jewish beliefs.

How far Job himself was impressed by these considerations, or at what particular point the voice out of the whirlwind touched him so as to induce his penitence and submission, we are not able to say. While he was vastly superior to his friends in mental fearlessness, general information, and comprehensive grasp, he was far from being emancipated from those theories against which he formally contends. Nor does he intimate that he is converted by Jahve's reasonings to a wider view of the universe and of humanity. All he really admits is his rashness; he has spoken without sufficient thought, without bearing sufficiently in mind the inevitable limits of human speculation on which he is occasionally quite ready to insist. In other words, his submission was mostly determined by the Hebrew and Eastern feeling of acquiescence to the inevitable—deference to the omnipotence which dominates our every human destiny, and which it is equally impossible to evade or oppose.

It cannot, however, be denied Job's penitence does present somewhat puzzling feature regarded as parts of the *dénouement* of the drama, unless, indeed, we regard it as a final expression of the insolubility of the problem which constitutes its plot. That Job had always maintained his integrity is not called in question by Jahve or by his own conscience. That his reasoning on the moral government of God—the question at issue—was not only sincere and fearless, but was orthodox and correct, is asserted on two different occasions by Jahve himself. There was, therefore, no imperative need of repentance, except as a solace to his own overcharged feelings, still less any demand for it on the part of Jahve. The statement of so many commentators that Job's reinstatement in his former prosperity was in consequence of this act of contrition is disproved by the narrative itself, which makes Jahve commend Job not for his penitence but for his truthful

utterances on the subject of his own Providential government. On the other hand, if Job's contribution to this question was in all respects correct, what need was there for Jahve's answer, especially as this insisted upon various considerations which Job in his haste and rashness had clearly overlooked. On the whole, it seems most reasonable to conclude that so far as Job's ratiocination with his friends was based, as it generally was, on a broader and more general view of the scope of Providence in opposition to the Hebrew special theory, so far was his argument praiseworthy. So far, however, as he had been intemperate in his language and sometimes unduly dogmatic or narrow in his conclusions, so far did his own conscience, after hearing Jahve's discourse, reproach him, and he felt the need of retractation and penitence.

We considered in the preceding essay what effect the representation of Prometheus would probably have upon a thoughtful Hellene; here we might inquire what was likely to be the influence of the Book of Job on a Hebrew hearer or reader. How did it leave the problem discussed? Would he gather from it that temporal happiness was no longer to be accepted as a token of God's favour, and that human suffering had no immediate relation to human demerit—that the old Jewish belief was thus altogether falsified? Probably not. He would most likely conclude, both from the general tone of the arguments as well as from the main incidents of the drama, that the question was left nearly in *statu quo*—that the problem, if not altogether insoluble, had a sufficiency of profound, many-sided and inconsistent aspects to prevent any given solution from being regarded as adequate. He would not think that the book, with all its power and beauty, had quite bridged over the gulf between the finite and the infinite, or that it altogether reconciled Divine omnipotence with human suffering. Besides, he could not forget the end—Job's restoration to all his former prosperity—and what it implied. He would perceive that virtue and physical happiness were thus reunited after the temporary estrangement they had undergone in Job's particular case, and that so far the problem of the book is finally left in the precise state in which it is taken up at the commencement.

Incidentally, however, no attentive reader of the book could

rise from its perusal without a new sense of revelation, not at all unlike the consciousness of new knowledge which a pious but thoughtful and candid Hellene would have derived from witnessing the representation of Prometheus and contrasting its lessons with the old mythological lore in which he had been indoctrinated. Such a student of the Book of Job could hardly fail to be struck: (1) With Job's sublime conviction of absolute justice as a sovereign power in the universe, however much its due manifestation might be impeded from different causes; or with the fact that it was precisely this that formed the basis of Job's invincible trust in Jahve, or rather in the goodness and justice which Jahve embodied to his spiritual consciousness. (2) He could not fail to notice the subjective side of the preceding consideration—Job's unassailable conviction of his own integrity, and therefore the virtual infallibility he assigns to the human consciousness. (3) He would probably observe, as the outcome of these two principles, the distinct sanction of honest doubt, free inquiry, free speech, which is presented by the words of Job, and thereby the justifiability of all questioning and research based on the pure love of truth, especially if attended by unselfishness, intellectual candour and religious reverence. (4) He would most likely recognise the greatly enlarged scope assigned, both in Job's speeches and Jahve's discourse, to ancient Hebrew notions on the subject of God and his government of the world; nor could he fail to perceive the effect of these broader conceptions in enlarging man's own view both of himself and of his true place in the universe. In short, to a candid and intellectual Hebrew, the study of the book might not inaptly be defined as a liberal education, especially if he had been nurtured on theocratic notions and on ideas of national exclusiveness. But (5) such a reader would be brought, as Prometheus, Job, Faust and all other genuine inquirers have been brought, to a conviction of the drawbacks of human truth-search proceeding from the unbounded scope of knowledge as well as from the limited powers of man. He would learn from Job the common lesson of all the skeptical dramas—that speculative truth was for man an impossibility, and that man must learn to be satisfied with the narrower but sufficing range of practical and ethical duty.

These free-thought results of a study of Job lead us to say a

concluding word on its relation to Prometheus, its predecessor, and to Faust, its successor in our series of skeptical dramas:—

I. Prometheus and Job are outcomes not only of different times and countries, but of different races and religions. The former represents Aryan and Western, the latter Semitic and Oriental civilisation. While, therefore, the first is marked by human general culture—interest in man's secular progress—the second is intensely religious, and concerns itself especially with man's spiritual relation to the deity. In point of culture and material progress the former has the advantage, in respect of religion and metaphysical profundity the latter stands highest. They are respectively types of idiosyncrasies which after the spread of Christianity found fitting outlets in the Western and Eastern Churches and in the diverse questions which each community loved best to discuss.

II. There is an essential distinction between the Zeus of Prometheus and the Jahve of the Book of Job. The former is to the Titan a new deity, the successor of two or more dynasties which have in turn wielded supremacy at Olympus. Jahve, on the other hand, is the eternal creator and sustainer of the universe. But this radical difference in the ruling deities of the two dramas seems to affect but little the freedom with which they are addressed by Prometheus and Job. This is founded upon a community of thought in respect of those ideas which form the basis and background of their respective theologies. Both Prometheus and Job are firm believers in absolute justice as a self-existent power or influence superior to all rule whether divine or human, as well as to all dogma and tradition, of whatsoever kind. It is because Prometheus is convinced that the rule of Zeus is not in harmony with justice that he rebels against and defies him, and, on the other hand, it is because Job is persuaded that Jahve's sovereignty is ultimately consonant with supreme justice that, however sorely tried, he never quite relinquishes his faith and trust in him. Both the Greek and Hebrew Titan further agree, as we noticed, in looking for a future vindicator of their innocence, and a defender against the oppression of Zeus and Jahve, though we have no right to press too closely a resemblance which is on some points accidental, however much it may be finally based on ideas of supreme justice common to both.

III. A more striking similarity dependent on these ideas is that the invective both of Prometheus and Job against their respective deities is grounded on the injustice they are held to have been guilty of towards man. Zeus has treated men harshly in refusing them fire and light, the primary requisites of civilisation. Jahve has ill-treated Job, and through him other men as well, by visiting him with sorrow, notwithstanding his piety and rectitude, in other words, by making no distinction in his dealings between the righteous and the wicked. Thus we have the different standpoints and problems of the two dramas. Prometheus represents human struggle with physical nature, with mythological fate, while Job portrays the same contest with the moral defects of the world, regarded from the Jewish point of view. The problems of Prometheus are human progress and liberty, and the alien influences which thwart and obstruct them; the problems of Job are special providence and retribution, the divine award for human acts and conduct, and the impediments to their due action in the world.

IV. While, however, both Prometheus and Job criticise their deities with a fearlessness based, as we have seen, on an invincible confidence in justice and conscience, their free speech is marked in each case by interesting diversities. That of Prometheus is founded upon an Hellenic combination of culture and reason—precisely the influences which induced the free criticism of the gods by Sokrates; but Job's freedom, though reason is by no means excluded from its bases, is largely due to religionism, the intimacy which comes from a mystic persuasion of nearness to and personal fellowship with deity. Incidentally, the first freedom may be compared to the free speech of the Italian Renaissance or the French encyclopædists, while the second may be illustrated by the devout but excessive freedom of mystics, or by that which the Puritans employed under the English Commonwealth. In other words, Prometheus addresses Zeus in the spirit of a thoughtful and fearless Athenian, a member of a cultured republic, while Job addresses Jahve as the scion of a theocracy—a divinely privileged religious community.

V. Not the least instructive among these contrasts of Prometheus and Job are their different conceptions of man: 1, in relation to deity; 2, in respect of his position in the universe.

1. Prometheus regards man in the developed state he has attained by his teaching as gifted with god-like reason—the sole agency of all wisdom and power. He is thus rendered to a certain extent independent of Zeus, and able to prosecute for himself his various researches into the fields of science, as well as to advance in all those provinces of general culture which are summed up in the word civilisation. This position is altogether different in Job. Here we find Jahve regarded as having duties to man not only of rule and supremacy, but of kindness and consideration. Conversely, man is held to be entirely dependent on Jahve, not only for his knowledge acquirements, but also for the faculties whereby he has attained them. Thus while Prometheus is the philosophic advocate of man's general culture and social progress, Job is especially the preacher of righteousness, who regards man's claim to equality with deity as moral and ethical rather than scientific and rational. In truth, man's supreme deity in the *Prometheus* is fate, as the power above and before Zeus, and his religious duties take therefore the form of divination. In the Book of Job, on the other hand, man, while rendering due homage by prayer and sacrifice to Jahve, is able to address him, if need be, with words of remonstrance and even of indignation, as a favourite child to its father.

2. Not less interesting are the different views of the dramas as to man's place in the universe. Prometheus especially insists on those aspects of human knowledge which relate to man's material and social progress. He recounts his advance in house building, in language, in numbers, in medical knowledge, in agriculture, etc. The human knowledge insisted on by Job is as befits a Bedouin chieftain of another kind, *e.g.*, mining, hunting, fishing, the study of natural history. The former regards man as dominant over nature and the impediments which nature offers to his advance in all the arts of civilisation and culture. With the latter nature is dominant over man, at least, is independent of man, so that wild beasts and uninhabited wastes are as much a care to Jahve as man and his dwellings. A striking proof of this is the perpetual reproach of "manless," etc., with which Prometheus stigmatises his abode on Mount Caucasus, compared with the stress which the Book of Job places on scenes and animals far removed from human dwellings. Other curious contrasts of the

same sort might be added, *e.g.*, Job regards behemoth and leviathan as untameable by man, whereas the taming of monsters is one power which Prometheus boasts he has conferred on man. So again Job dwells on the wildness and natural restiveness of the horse, while Prometheus claims to have taught men how to make him obedient to the reins. The greatest triumph of human ingenuity for Job is mining and smelting metals. Prometheus regards the operation as one among ordinary human labours. No doubt these distinctions testify to different civilisations and ideas pertaining to civilisation. The contrast here pointed out is largely such as might be expected from an Athenian writer like Aeschylus, with the urban instincts which Athenians so readily developed, and the nature-loving proclivities of an Arab chief, whose home is in the desert. Here the contrast is adduced as showing that if the *Prometheus* as the drama of material progress, has in some respects advantages over the religious drama of Job, these are largely compensated by the fuller and more comprehensive outlook over nature, and by greater philosophic breadth in its estimate of the divine rule of the universe which pertain to the latter.

VI. More truthful also is Job in its clear and emphatic teaching as to the drawbacks and limitations of human knowledge. In *Prometheus*, the drawbacks attending knowledge-diffusion from the Greek point of view are illustrated by the fate of the Titan himself, but the countless obstructions to human knowledge—the utter impossibility of human omniscience—the fatal brevity of human life—all these considerations are urged not by Prometheus but by unsympathetic friends or open foes. More decisive than their expostulations is Job's final verdict as to the impossibility of finding wisdom or discovering the abode of understanding, while far transcending in philosophical and moral insight anything contained in the *Prometheus* is Job's practical outcome of human nescience—his categorical imperative of human duty—the fear of the lord is wisdom, and to flee evil is understanding. In fairness, however, we should add that the human knowledge described in the *Prometheus* consists for the most part of those arts and sciences which contribute to man's material progress, and that it leaves untouched all speculative theorising on the great problems of the universe.

VII. We cannot institute any comparison, whether of contrast or similarity, between Job's final submission and retraction and the continued defiance of Zeus with which the *Prometheus* concludes, because we have not the third part of the Aeschylean Trilogy. That the Titan finally came to terms with the supreme ruler of Olympus is, however, certain¹; indeed, this is already foreshadowed in the *Prometheus Vincetus* itself (lines 195-200). Now the Job drama gives us not only "Job bound"—by the original conspiracy formed against him, as well as by his own misfortunes and sufferings—but we have also "Job unbound"—i.e., victorious over his enemies and freed from his calamities. There is therefore no essential difference between the conclusions of the two dramas. The Greek as well as the Hebrew Titan learn at last the lesson of submission to omnipotence, and acquiescence in the bounds of finite knowledge and limited power.

Turning now to "Faust," we find the contrasts and similarities between the Book of Job and Goethe's masterpiece equally various and striking. No doubt the interval which separates "Faust" from Job is greater than that which divides Job from *Prometheus*, and in proportion to the greatness of the interval is the disparity in range of thought and idea. But in point of fact, the distance which severs "Faust" from both *Prometheus* and Job is immeasurable, and for practical purposes infinite. A Bedouin chieftain of the seventh century before Christ, an Athenian thinker of the fifth century before Christ, suddenly introduced to the modes of thought and of scientific research of our own time, illustrate the gap which divides the ancient dramas of free thought from their great successor in modern times. Indeed, "Faust" introduces us into the midst not only of modern thought but of modern advanced thought. But notwithstanding this enormous difference and its many-sided implications, the framework of the knowledge-drama remains for the most part the same. There is the central figure of the man who strives to attain or diffuse truth. There are the sovereign powers that thwart him in his efforts. There is the conflict and its vicissitudes. There is, lastly, the final issue—all these common elements remain. They are so many skeleton forms sharing the

¹ Comp. on this point Welcker, *Prometheus*, p. 35.

same type. They are found in "Faust," as in *Prometheus* and *Job*. But how different in shape, size and general embodiment—how varied in dramatic incident, tone and colouring. The Zeus of Olympus, the National Jahve of the Jews, each is in Goethe's tragedy transmuted into an impersonal ruler of the universe—the principle of all vitality and productiveness. The Satan of *Job* is in like manner transformed into the principle of destruction, stagnation and nothingness. Faust, the type of the modern inquirer, is similarly metamorphosed from his ancient Hebrew or Hellenic type. Though like them an earnest truth-searcher, he is no longer concerned with the beginnings of human knowledge like Prometheus, nor with the religious problems of *Job*. He has long since investigated all these matters and outgrown them. He has reached the farthest attainable limit of all human knowledge, but, as we shall discover, he still reveals the perennial phenomena of thought-search—the old doubts—the old yearnings—the old disappointments—the old despair—the old endeavours—the old consciousness of limit and, finally, the old enforced acquiescence in nescience.

I. The first point in which *Job* is related particularly to "Faust" is in its plot. This, we need hardly say, is reproduced bodily from the Book of *Job*. Few readers of "Faust" are aware how much and how deliberately Goethe contrived to permeate his mind with Jobian spirit and ideas while concocting his tragedy of "Faust". Not only have we the imitation just spoken of, of the opening scene in heaven, but occasionally throughout the drama we have reminiscences of the man of Uz. Two Jobian elements especially commended themselves to Goethe. The defiant invective against Jahve was quite in harmony with Goethe's own Titanism, while the pessimism of other portions of the book was no less consonant to some of his Werther moods, especially during the earlier half of his life. *Job* must therefore be regarded as one of the foundation-stones of Goethe's "Faust". Indeed, its influence must be extended to all the Faust legends of the mediæval ages. Whatever plot or story was founded on a compact between God and Satan, or between Satan and man, could claim *Job* as a precedent and authority—and all the more unimpeachable because it was sacred. Perhaps no idea of pure legendary lore has been so prolific in this respect as the *Job* plot;

none has taken such a countless variety of forms, or provided aliment for so many imaginations of such various aptitudes and powers.

II. Goethe's philosophic enlargement of Jahve, and his special providence as conceived by the Jews, to the general principle of life, motion, and fruitfulness, which permeates and energises through all nature, is conceived on the lines of Jahve's own discourse in the Book of Job. While no comparison can be made of the extent of the generalisation in each case, the motive and tendencies of both are alike. Both aim at universalising what had been special, broadening what had been limited, extending to the world what had been restricted to Palestine, and to creation at large what had been confined to the Jewish people. Goethe's parallel expansion of the spirit of evil to the general principle of destruction and lifelessness—the necessary complement of the former—while too profound in its actual development for the Book of Job finds in it a few suggestions and incidental affinities. Satan is certainly conceived by it as the agency of disease, and in certain cases as the minister of death.

III. The problem of "Faust"—in this particular more resembling that of *Prometheus*—is intellectual rather than religious. But even with this difference the basis is in essentials that of Job. In both man has to contend with his surroundings of different kinds—human beliefs and tradition—inexplicable laws and aspects of nature—intellectual and spiritual needs equally imperious and insatiable—calamities in his own life—inextricable complications in social relations, etc., etc. In both he must discover some standpoint of reconciliation which he can loyally and honestly accept, and until he finds such a haven of rest, either within himself or in the world outside, he will naturally be at war with his environment. Hence,

IV. Both Job and "Faust" are dramas of effort and truth search. *Streben*, the key-note of "Faust," is in reality the governing impulse of Job's life. Their main differences are purely verbal. The absolute truth of the modern philosopher Job conceives and defines either as deity or as divine wisdom. It is just this sincere wisdom or truth effort that forms the justification of Job's impetuous and wayward moods, as well as of his vehement invective against Jahve because he refuses to respond

to his passionate yearnings and to reveal himself and his ways as the sole object of his inquiries. Whoever compares the opening scenes of "Faust" with the 28th chapter of Job will perceive that they really reveal the likenesses of the same truth-searcher sketched in different methods and colours by two painters of very different schools, the chief traits being closely similar notwithstanding the great differences in style, manner, and accessories.

V. The conclusions both of Job and "Faust" are alike. The problems of the universe are pronounced by both to be inscrutable; in the words of Goethe, this is "on rational grounds the inevitable result" of all human inquiry.¹ Hence there is nothing left for man when he has exhausted all methods and degrees of search but acquiescence in the insoluble residuum. The great stress which Goethe placed on this "Renunciation," as he termed it, is a point which will meet us in the next essay. Here we need only remark as at once the summary and conclusion of our Job study, that *Prometheus*, Job, and "Faust," the representatives of races and countries, nationalities and religions, civilisations and ideas so widely apart, all agree in the implicit answer to Job's questions.

But wisdom (truth), where shall that be found?
Where is the place of understanding?
No man knoweth its worth,
Nor is it found in the land of the living.
The depth saith: "It is not in me";
And the sea saith: "It is not in me".

So far all are agreed, both in the truth of human nescience, and in its mode of expression. Job, however, as becomes a religious philosopher, goes one step further, and gives a specially Hebrew and religious colouring to beliefs which *Prometheus* and "Faust" both accept in another form.

And unto man he said :—
The fear of the Lord is wisdom,
And to avoid evil is understanding.

¹ *Aus meinen Leben, Vierter Theil, Werke*, vol. ix., p. 588.

GOETHE'S FAUST

MOTTOES.

Die bedeutende Puppenspielfabel des andern (Faust) Klang und summt gar vieltönig in mir wieder. Auch ich hatte mich in allem Wissen umhergetrieben und war früh genug auf die Eitelkeit desselben hingewiesen worden. Ich hatte es auch im Leben auf allerlei Weise versucht, und war immer unbefriedigter und gequälter zurückgekommen.

GOETHE, *Aus Meinem Leben*, Book x.

The mystery of existence is an awful problem, but it is a mystery, and placed beyond the boundaries of human faculty! Recognise it as such and renounce. Knowledge can only be relative, never absolute. But this relative knowledge is infinite, and to us infinitely important: in that wide sphere let each work according to ability. Happiness, ideal and absolute, is equally unattainable. Renounce it. The sphere of active duty is wide, sufficing, ennobling to all who strenuously work in it.

LEWES' *Life of Goethe*, p. 479.

Wer Alles und Jedes in seiner ganzen Menschheit thun oder geniessen will, wer alles ausser sich zu einer solchen Art von Genuss verknüpfen will, der wird seine Zeit nur mit einem ewig unbefriedigten Streben hinbringen.

GOETHE, *Wilhelm Meisters Lehrjahre*, viii., 7.

Es irrt der Mensch, so lang er strebt.

Gerettet ist das edle Glied

Der Geisterwelt vom Bösen:

Wer immer strebend sich bemüht,

Den können wir erlösen.

GOETHE, *Faust*.

COMPARED with *Prometheus* and Job, Goethe's "Faust" brings us into contact with the relation of skepticism to the whole sum of human knowledge. Divided by twenty centuries from the latest of those dramas, the interval of time is not greater than the distance in scope and object which sunders them. Prometheus and Faust represent respectively the Alpha and Omega of human progress and enlightenment. The Titan prides himself on his extrication of humanity from the condition of "cave-dwellers". Faust has exhausted *omne scibile*—the whole sum of human knowledge. Prometheus taught men how to build houses of sun-burnt brick. Faust has explored and dissected the most elaborate systems of human thought. Prometheus taught men how to speak articulately. Faust knows and despises all the resources of scientific logic and rhetoric. The Titan instructed men in the rudiments of the healing art. Faust has penetrated its profoundest secrets. In a word, the former drama represents humanity as in many respects in its early youth; the latter portrays it in its sere but dissatisfied old age.

Nor is the interval less great which separates Job, the Bedouin chief of the seventh century B.C., from the Teutonic philosopher of the eighteenth century of the Christian era. Job is the religious doubter—the daring questioner of God's attributes; Faust denies his personal existence. Job makes all the events of the universe the outcome of the Creator's will; Faust regards them as manifestations of irreversible law. In all his doubts and perplexities, Job still cherishes a secret trust in God. Faust has passed into a denial of all supernatural powers as the causes of human fear or hope :—

Mich plagen keine Scrupel noch Zweifel,
Fürchte mich weder keine Scrupel noch Teufel.

But the distinction between those ancient doubters and Faust, great as it is, is altogether surpassed in importance by

their similarities. For notwithstanding the revolutions of so many centuries and the multiform changes they have produced among men, one thing has still retained its stability—the nature of the human mind—the instinctive aptitudes and propensities of its faculties. Prometheus, Job and Faust are beings of kindred thought, sympathies and aspirations. No doubt they are generated by very different conditions of human progress, but beneath the divergencies thus produced they share a common basis in respect of motive, method and aim. Thus they resemble each other in representing humanity as having attained the stage of self-consciousness and independence. They all represent a dissonance as existing between man and his surroundings. They all vindicate the right of man to analyse traditional and prescribed opinions and to determine for himself what to choose and what to reject. They all seek for freedom by means of doubt. To these may be added the further similarity—shared also by Hamlet and Calderon's, *El magico prodigioso*—that they are products of analogous conditions in the intellectual developments to which they severally belong. In *Prometheus*, e.g., the Greek intellect at its highest point of maturity casts a retrospective glance at its older beliefs, places itself in antagonism to the popular faith, vindicates human independence and prospects for humanity an indefinite advance in culture. Job seems the outcome of a similar crisis in the history of the Hebrews, when by means of its own development and contact with Gentile races the Jewish intellect criticises and calls in question its older theocratic conceptions of providence, retribution, etc. Faust represents the mingled unrest and consciousness of intellectual independence of modern Europe, from the time of the Renaissance to the German “*Sturm und Drang*”. In a narrower sphere, both Hamlet and the wonder-working magician of Calderon were products in their respective countries and times of literary maturity, combined with deep mental disquietude. Nor is this all; Faust shares with the preceding dramas of free-thought the same key-note—their chief distinctive qualities are restlessness, strife, effort, contention. They represent men—human giants all—engaged in Titanic enterprises, grappling with antagonistic surroundings, however necessary or inevitable these might be. Prometheus contends with Zeus for the well-being of humanity.

He fights for human light, progress and civilisation. Job contends with Jahve for his own personal rights, for the reward that should wait on conscious rectitude, and through himself for justice to oppressed humanity. Hamlet struggles with an untoward fate and with a personal unfitness to approve himself superior to it. Similarly, the text-word of Faust is "Streben"—perpetual effort, with its collateral implications of error, unrest and unceasing search; this is the quality that connects Faust and all kindred spirits with Greek skeptics. The philosophic free-thinker of ancient Greece was not the denier, but the indomitable searcher—the man who would fain attain, were it possible, absolute truth. Faust cherished similar yearnings, not only for absolute truth but for infinite happiness. He represents the Zetetic of the seventeenth century from the point of view of one of its greatest thinkers.

Not that Goethe was himself a skeptic. Probably he was unable adequately to comprehend the true skeptical standpoint, he certainly did not consciously sympathise with it. His nature was too sensuous and realistic to appreciate search for absolute truth. Though full of ardent zeal for inquiry, especially in his own domain of natural science, he was not enamoured of controversy, nor did he care for intellectual exercitation for its own sake. In this particular he resembled Shakespeare, who was equally averse to speculative extremes. So far from being a true skeptic, Goethe was on some points unwarrantably dogmatic. This is conclusively shown by his attitude on his *farbenlehre* theory. It was characteristic of him that he occupied in the domain of belief that central point which he tried to attain on all matters of human thought and practice. Thus he united in equal proportions skepticism with dogmatism, just as he did realism with idealism, intellectualism with sensuality, dignity with extravagance, gentleness with *hauteur*, kindness with severity. He seems to have prided himself on the coequal development of every faculty or tendency of his humanity. In trying to attain this equipoise he occasionally forgot that if on one side man is related to the angel, he is on the other allied to the ape, and that it behoves every reasoning being to let the angel scale of his balances preponderate.

Goethe's impatience of extreme skepticism was the result of

different causes. Foremost among them we must place his intense realism, his passionate regard for the visible and palpable aspects of Nature, his keen sense of the phenomenal and actual. Not that he was deficient in metaphysical power regarded as a theoretical apprehension of supersensuous entities. He was conversant with the German philosophy of his time, and recognised the transcendental impulse it had taken from Kant. He regarded the great teachers of Königsberg with approval, but distrusted and ridiculed the developments of it which Fichte, Jacobi and others had begun to make. His realistic idiosyncrasy presented everything to him in a sensuous form. Even abstractions he loved to contemplate as actually existing entities. When, for example, he showed Schiller the typical plant form on which he had founded his law of plant metamorphosis, his brother poet characteristically exclaimed: "That is not an experience; that is an idea". Goethe was taken aback at this metaphysical interpretation of what he deemed a natural fact, but he at once recognised the distinction in their mental confirmations which the observation betrayed. Instead of transmuting, as Schiller was apt to do, the phenomenal into the ideal, Goethe, whenever possible, attempted the contrary operation. Hence his true universe was Nature, regarded as a living entity, instinct with life, movement and energy. He was never tired of watching her various processes expatiating on her countless mysteries, calling attention to her incomparable beauties, while nothing gave him so much delight as a discovery which enabled him to reduce her manifold operations to a common law. Compared with Nature, humanity had only a secondary interest for Goethe. He would at any time have abandoned the creation of his noblest human character in order to investigate a law of plant growth or some recondite fact of anatomy, and it is well known that he estimated his dramatic productions as worthless compared with his discoveries in physical science.

Very instructive is the comparison of Goethe with Shakespeare in this particular. In his dislike of metaphysical speculation the latter was also realistic, but he sought his realities in a

¹ *Wahrheit und Dichtung*, p. 695; *Werke*, vol. ix. It may be mentioned that the edition of Goethe's works quoted in this essay is that of the *Bibliothek der Deutschen National-literatur*, edited by Kurz.

different direction. While with Goethe Nature ranks highest, and humanity with its mysteries derives its importance as being a component part of Nature, with Shakespeare humanity stands supreme. He explores with never failing delight the profundities not of physical, but of human nature. He loves to investigate the perplexities by which motives are surrounded and disguised—the subtle links which connect men's wills and actions—the countless phases of human passion—the innumerable problems which arise from social relations and intercourse—and all the other multifarious operations of that wonderful machine—humanity. Of the two objects which Kant affirmed used to strike him with especial wonderment, *viz.*, the starry universe and the mind of man, Goethe would have laid stress on the former, Shakespeare on the latter.

But both Goethe and Shakespeare agree in making their universes of cosmic and human nature a reason for distrusting supersubtle idealities—the extreme abstrusities and refinements of the reason and imagination. Each says of his own universe, the circle which confines his thoughts and sympathies: “This gives me truth and reality. This universe of Nature or of man affords scope and verge enough for the fullest exercise of my fancy and my reason. Why project myself into idealities unfathomable and interminable? Why lose myself in trying to penetrate the absolute when the relative so far transcends my power? Why investigate possibilities when I am not competent to determine actualities?” or, putting the dilemma in the form which Goethe generally employed, why explore metaphysics when the realm of physics so far surpasses our limited faculties? No doubt there were resemblances between the worlds of Goethe and Shakespeare by means of which they were alike able to oppose themselves to extreme idealism. 1. Both were visible and tangible. Goethe had only to go to his garden to find a plant that besides being an actual fact was both a stupendous mystery in itself, and suggested unlimited scope for theorising. Shakespeare had only to converse with the first man he met to discover a human problem which he would at once have admitted was impenetrable. Both plant and man were capable of affording sufficient aliment for physical and metaphysical observation without trenching on the unseen world of ideas. 2. Both

were alike in their nearness and interest for the thinker. Goethe's nature, Shakespeare's man were only different forms of the common consciousness of each. The former delighted to represent a man, especially when, in his judgment, he was *in se ipso totus, teres atque rotundus*, as a nature, while Shakespeare's nature was, in its fullest concentration and supremest effort, humanity. There was nothing in either of these cases of the ordinary distance between the skeptical idealist and the subject matter of his speculations. 3. Both were alike in representing movement on a world-wide scale. Shakespeare and Goethe were evidently enamoured of motion, life, and active energy, but the movement that delighted Goethe was the equable motion of the universe, the action and interaction of its countless laws and processes, while Shakespeare loved better to contemplate the surge and clash of rival human interests and activities. But with these resemblances there emerges one cardinal distinction between the imaginations of Goethe and Shakespeare. That of the former was cosmic, while that of the latter was human.

It would be hard to say that there is more scope for imagination in physical science investigation than in researches into purely human and social phenomena. Possibly the diverse directions and methods of that forward faculty in each case are sufficient to establish a diversity of nature. Certainly none of those thinkers who have been most eminent in applying imagination to solve the problems of the universe have attained to the first rank as dramatists. Goethe, it is true, discovered the law of plant metamorphosis and created "Faust," but the latter creation, with all its excellencies, is entirely inferior in uniformity and artistic finish to the highest products of the Shakespearian drama, *e.g.*, "Hamlet," "Othello," and "Lear". Hence results the dissimilarity already spoken of, which is apparent in the common dislike of Shakespeare and Goethe to metaphysics. Both poets allowed their fancy what might be termed metaphysical licence. Both projected their imagination into supersensuous regions, but the human imagination of Shakespeare showed more aptitude for such an ethereal excursion than did the cosmic imagination of Goethe. If Shakespeare distrusted metaphysics, it was only when they were opposed to human physics, when they were altogether divorced from the practical activities

and concernments of mankind. The distrust probably served to confine his fancy within a more limited area, and this very limitation imparted greater probability to its creations. Goethe, on the other hand, projecting his imagination beyond the limits of the visible universe, and disdaining to regulate its flight by the metaphysical facts of humanity, allows it to attain a scope far surpassing both his belief and his artistic power. Hence arises a distrust of excess which seems to us to have affected prejudicially his creative faculty in the region of pure imagination. In other words, Goethe never believes in the creations of his supersensuous fancy, or, at most, it is only half belief. He is a skeptic in imagination when its scope is transcendental. This is readily seen by any reader who compares his supernatural personages with the more human creations of his phantasy. The transcendental personages which occupy the second part of "*Faust*" are quite a case in point. Not only are they grotesquely unreal in themselves, but the poet allows us to perceive that *he also* thought them unreal. He thus permits the creative function of his imagination to transcend its plastic harmonising power. Now there is nothing of this in Shakespeare. With a dislike for metaphysics as great as Goethe's, he confines his imagination more within the scope of his own belief and sympathies. He never projects his fancy into unknown regions, and there creates beings and abstractions beyond his power of intellectual and artistic assimilation. All Shakespeare's superhuman creations are only expansions of human aptitudes and faculties. In short he recognised the profound truth, that it is man's own composite nature, not cosmic phenomena, that forms the best guide to idealities whose right to human sympathy and recognition must be determined by humanity itself.

We might have supposed that the extreme and somewhat non-human reach of Goethe's imagination would have inclined him to favour the transcendental research of skepticism—not that the imagination nourished by cosmic influences is more liable to skeptical excess than that founded on observation of humanity, doubt having its germ and scope alike in the universe without and in the universe within, but, as we have seen, its influence was counterbalanced by other characteristics. Besides his sensuous temperament, which would fain realise even abstrac-

tions, his hatred of mysteries and insoluble questions, his cultivation of mental serenity, his stress on disinterestedness, not only as a moral, but as an intellectual habit, all conspired to thwart and repress whatever skeptical impulses he might otherwise have cherished. He was not only convinced of the limits of human reason, but he fully acquiesced in the existence of those limits. He did not care, as a genuine skeptic would have done, to investigate closely their existence or their nature, still less to ponder the problem how they might conceivably be surmounted. He had ascertained by personal investigation that they existed and that to him, as probably to others, they were ultimate. With this he professed himself satisfied. How closely this position of Goethe's and the resolve founded on it agrees with the similar conclusion of Shakespeare, we shall see in our next essay. No doubt Goethe's standpoint was confirmed in his own judgment by his natural science studies. The limits of human reason were only one form or aspect of other limitations pertaining both to the thinker and his thought. That he could not transcend the bounds of the outer world of nature was so far an argument of his inability to pass the limits of the inner world of mind. In truth, one was as infinite as the other. Accordingly he forced himself to acquiesce. He renounced the dubious pleasure of struggling with the inevitable, of trying to extort from nature or humanity demonstrations which they were powerless to afford. He accepted as the final dictum, both of his nature and his human studies, the fact that knowledge is surrounded on all sides by infinitudes and inscrutabilities. This position he frequently admits as his own, and inculcates on his friends. Thus in a letter to Pfenniger, a friend of Lavater, he says:¹ "Believe me, dear brother, the time will come when we shall understand each other. You talk to me as a skeptic who wishes to *understand*, to have all demonstrated, who has had no experience. The contrary of all this is the fact. Am I not more resigned in matters of understanding and demonstration than you are?" In a similar strain he says to Eckermann: "The summit of human attainment is astonishment, and if an ultimate phenomenon has astonished us, we ought to rest content; nothing higher can be granted to us,

¹ Quoted by Lewes, *Life of Goethe*, p. 166.

and we ought not to seek anything behind it; this is our limit. But generally the sight of an ultimate phenomenon does not satisfy, and we are like children who, after looking into a mirror, immediately reverse it to see what is on the other side." This was Goethe's own standpoint from which, however much he might speculatively deviate, he never wholly departed. But while maintaining this position he was fully aware—as the quotations just adduced serve to prove—that other intellects were differently constructed from his own. Indeed, he manifests a peculiar aptitude for criticising the extreme malcontents of skepticism, for tracing in whatever direction, and under whatever disguise, the dissatisfaction with the universe which he professed to disclaim. He makes, for example, Werther, the skeptic of passion, thus bemoan his condition: "When I look upon the limits within which man's powers of action and inquiry are hemmed in; when I see how all effort issues simply in procuring supply for wants which again have no object but continuing this poor existence of ours, and then that all satisfaction on certain points of inquiry is but a dreaming resignation, while you paint with many coloured figures and gay prospects the walls you sit imprisoned by—all this, Wilhelm, makes me dumb. I return to my own heart, and find there such a world!" etc.¹ Of a similar propensity in the region of speculation Lessing was his favourite illustration. He said to Eckermann: "Lessing, from his polemical nature, loved best the region of doubt and contradiction. Analysis is his province as there his fine understanding could most aid him. . . . You will find me wholly the reverse. I have always avoided contradiction, striven to dispel doubt by inward efforts and uttered only the results of my mental processes." Again, speaking of a controversial tract written against Spinoza, he says: "It made little impression on me, for I hated controversies, and always wanted to know *what* a thinker thought, and not what another conceived *he ought to have thought*".² These quotations, which might easily be increased, suffice to show the nature and grounds of Goethe's aversion to extreme skepticism. They also indicate its fluctuating and uncertain extent. Goethe certainly had a theoretical and artistic conception of

¹ Goethe, *Werke*, vol. vi., p. 12.

² Lewes, p. 170.

skepticism which far transcended his own personal sympathies, as we shall presently see when we come to examine his "Faust," but even within the narrower circle of his own individuality, he was unwilling that his recognition of the bounds of reason should have the effect of compelling his investigations to stop short of their very extremest capacities. His desire was still to explore as far and as fully as his mental powers or the objects of his quest permitted. Thus when he had withdrawn his attention more and more from the observation of humanity and concentrated it on natural science, he describes the change in these terms: "No one acquainted with the charm which the secrets of nature have for man will wonder that I have quitted the circle of observations in which I have hitherto been confined, and have thrown myself with passionate delight into this new circle. I stand in no fear of the reproach that it must be a spirit of contradiction which has drawn me from the contemplation and portraiture of the human heart to that of nature. For it will be allowed that all things are intimately connected, and that *the inquiring mind is unwilling to be excluded from anything attainable*. And I who have known and suffered from the perpetual agitation of feelings and opinions in myself and in others delight in the sublime repose which is produced by contact with the great and eloquent silence of nature."¹ Regarded as a self-revelation of his own nature, this passage is very noteworthy. It indicates both the philosophical and personal grounds of his objection to extreme skeptic idealism. As to the former, man must limit his quest by what is attainable. His ideal must be capable of some kind of realisation. Quite in harmony with this conception was his opinion of the uselessness of searching for final causes. He was as fully convinced as was Bacon of their sterility for scientific purposes. Man might put the questions what and how, he was forbidden to ask why; or if he dared that ultimate of all human interrogations, the silence of nature was its sole response. In the same direction of acquiescence in the commonly accepted limits of human investigation pointed his own most cherished idiosyncrasy—the equable temperament which was the one imperative necessity of his existence.

¹ Lewes, p. 278.

He identified doubt and the disruption and conflict which attended it with inward commotion and disturbance, and for this reason regarded it with disfavour. This fact, however, does not destroy, it only qualifies, what is equally true, *viz.*, that Goethe was fully aware both from his own experience and that of others that doubt was a perfectly natural and legitimate procedure. Nor could he deny its utility as a pioneer of human enlightenment, however much he might have wished that the course of this world had been so peaceably ordered by Providence that no occasion had been afforded for such violent commotions as the Reformation or the French Revolution. These cataclysms in human history seem to have exercised the same disturbing effect on his views of the progress of humanity, as did the earthquake at Lisbon and similar catastrophes on his belief in the providential government of the universe. It may, however, be suspected, not unfairly, that there is some amount of affectation in Goethe's professed dislike of the mental disturbance arising from doubt. Both his own history and that of his chief creations are at least agreed—as we shall see further on—in testifying to a most wonderful and intimate acquaintance with the thoughts, feelings, and methods of skeptics—sufficient to account for if not fully to justify the skeptical reputation which has always attached to the name of Goethe.

But while we concede Goethe's antipathy to extreme skeptical idealism, we must beware of denying or underestimating the generally idealistic set of his intellect. In point of fact, he was himself an ardent idealist. In philosophy, in natural science, in poetry, in art, in religion, his never failing impulse was to exalt, sublimate, and refine the raw material which those subjects presented to him. His cherished object was to transfer into a higher region of thought, to transmute into ideas, ethereal, permanent, and universal, the *res* which nature or humanity proffered for his acceptance. This treatment of the outer world he regarded as the highest function of literature.¹ Nor was this object at all inconsistent with his avowed realism. On the contrary, the mere *res*—the facts of the world and humanity—only attained their due measure of reality, their highest reach of

¹ Compare Hettner, *Geschichte der Deutschen Literatur*, iii., 1., p. 139.

truth and universality, by being thus regenerated and spiritualised. Without this idealising faculty—innate, according to Goethe, in every man¹—nature were a mere mass of disconnected phenomena. The mind of man now, like the spirit of God in Genesis, sits brooding on the waters, and thus evolves order out of disorder, thoughts from things, kosmos from chaos, reality from *res*. By a similar process, men are enabled to lay hold of, co-ordinate, the facts of experience, and apply them as rules of social existence or artistic perfection. Only Goethe required for this ideal realism, or real idealism, a firm basis either in his own consciousness, or in the undisputed truths of nature and humanity. Moreover, he required that the idealisation should have its limits distinctly marked, that it should confine its operations within the bounds of the humanly useful or attainable. Purely metaphysical idealism, that which had its starting-point, for example, in the imagination or the physically non-real, and was prepared to transcend ordinary human capacities, he profoundly distrusted. “You have long known,” said he to Falk, “that ideas which are without a firm foundation in the sensible world, whatever be their value in other respects, bring with them no conviction to me”;² and on another occasion: “I am accustomed to attach no extraordinary value to ideas which have no foundation in sensible perceptions”.³ In other words, Goethe disliked the “high *a priori*” road of truth research, and was content to pursue the slower but surer path of the experience philosophy of Bacon and Des Cartes. Many illustrations might be adduced of this his favourite procedure. He even identified it with genius. “What is genius,” he asks, “but the faculty of seizing and turning to account everything that strikes us—of co-ordinating and breathing life into all the materials that present themselves, of taking here marble, there brass, and building a lasting monument with them?”⁴ We have already alluded to Goethe’s researches into the archi-typal plant (the story is hardly less typical of Goethe’s intellectual method). As we have seen,

¹ On this point see his letter to W. von Humboldt, *Werke*, xii., p. 447. It is translated in Miss Austin’s *Characteristics*, iii., p. 302.

² *Characteristics*, vol. i., p. 69.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 83.

⁴ *Characteristics*, iii., p. 75.

this was to him a conclusion from a large induction—a generalisation abstracted from many concrete examples. It was no more, therefore, than a scientific fact based on experience, and he was irritated with Schiller for stating it in terms not of experience, but of idealism. But from his own standpoint Schiller was right. The difference between them consisted in this: Goethe never forgot the concrete facts from which the abstraction was derived, and to which it owed whatever amount of veraciousness it might be said to possess, while Schiller valued the idea in and for itself as a self-existent, universal, eternal truth, and was unwilling to tie it down to a material, sensuous, or individual origin. Goethe's *Urpflanze* was only one of a whole class of similar idealisations. He speculated on such abstractions as *Urthier*, *Urmensch*, *Ewig-weibliche*, as archetypal forms of animal, man, and woman, not, of course, in Plato's sense of independent forms, but as personal Goethean abstractions from a number of individuals. Goethe applied the same method to every other subject-matter of thought. Schiller complained that his whole philosophy was subjective, meaning that it was too individualistic. He adds that he cannot agree with it because "it extracts from the senses what he (Schiller) would draw from the soul".¹ The same procedure is seen in Goethe's teachings on Art. He defines artistic perfection as the union of nature and the idealising power of the artist, "nature and the idea being inseparable". Similarly religion was the etherialised junction of the facts of nature and of the needs, instincts, and feelings of man, while God was in simple terms an idealisation of nature. Jacobi's mystic assertion that nature hid God caused Goethe more irritation than any of the many discrepancies which threatened to interrupt their friendship, it contravened so completely his own most cherished opinion on the true origin of the idea of God. But here, as in all the other provinces of Goethe's thought, the basis was sensuous and substantial. The material universe was a fact. The deliverances of man's consciousness and his idealising faculties were indisputable, and these were Goethe's double foundation for the superstructure of all truth. We shall see further on that this subjective individual idealism had an

¹ *Ersch und Gruber*, sect. i., vol. lxxii., p. 305, Art. "Goethe".

unmistakably skeptical significance, though not sufficient to controvert Goethe's own disclaimer of skeptical idealism.

Leaving now Goethe's idealism we must next call attention to other features of his life and character which disclose a more pronounced affinity to skepticism. First among these must be placed his appreciation of freedom, especially as a condition of personal development. To English readers of his numerous biographies this is probably the most striking characteristic of his life. Whether it be our insular prejudice or the outcome of superior moral training, we are certainly surprised at the latitude of thought and conduct which Goethe permitted himself from his early youth to his old age. Some of his biographers have discerned a special significance in the unusual absence of restraint or home discipline which marked his youthful years. A more philosophical mode of accounting for his ardent love of liberty would be to find it in his intellectual and moral organisation, for no fact in his life is better attested than his resolve at an early stage of his career to become a law unto himself.¹ He claimed, in other words, to determine the scope and direction of his faculties as he himself saw best. Goethe's conception of liberty was thus mainly personal and subjective. It represented the area within which moved his intellectual and imaginative as well as his sensuous and emotional impulses—the scope which seemed required by his human development in all directions. The exciting agencies as well as the limits of this freedom were furnished by himself by his own wants, desires and propensions. What an immense range these afforded to a nature like Goethe's is well known to every reader of his works. In every department of literature and art, of human thought and practice, he found a field for the exercise of his faculties and a stimulus to that exercise. Regarded from his personal standpoint, mental freedom was as essential to his spiritual as fresh air was to his physical well-being. No doubt he recognised, as we have already observed,

¹ Compare *Wahrheit und Dichtung*, book xi. (Werke vol. ix., p. 299). Hettner in his *Geschichte*, vol. iii., 1, pp. 9, 10, has pointed out that this self-legislation and self-development was claimed by all the young geniuses of the "Sturm und Drang." It is the conflict of this claim with social and political restraints that constitutes the root thought of Werther.

certain limits both in speculation and conduct which in theory he professed never to overstep. Not only so, but he was fond of insisting that such limits were essential for the highest enjoyment of freedom. Renunciation was in his judgment the highest law and manifestation of human development whether in speculation, in ethics, or in art. He perpetually claimed to have established such limits in his own case, and was undoubtedly sincere in asserting this claim, but we must remember that the bound is assigned by himself as the measure, not of his own volition or convenience, as of the utmost stretch of his intellectual powers, or of his most cultured sense of right, duty and morality. "A man is never happy," says Jarno in *Wilhelm Meister*, "till his vague striving has *itself* marked out its proper limitation."¹ The principal thus indicated may be held to represent the law of Goethe's inner being. We may define it as a general maxim thus. All human faculties and appetites are self-determining. Each possesses a certain innate spontaneously energising power which is capable of recognising its proper sphere of action, and of abstaining from encroachment on its limits. The importance of this dictum is at once apparent, and Goethe applies it to every endowment or energy of man.² At the same time the limits are confessedly subjective and personal both in range and origin, and this fact supplies the clue to Goethe's idea of liberty. That a bound should be placed arbitrarily and *ab extra* to the free exercise of any of his powers, or independently of his consent to the satisfaction of his impulses was a thought not to be borne. Nor, we must add, was Goethe always satisfied with the limits he had himself prescribed. Not a few of his actions serve to prove that Natalia's account of her uncle in *Wilhelm Meister's Lehrjahre* is a diagnosis of himself: "Yet he was obliged to confess that life and breath would almost leave him if he did not now and then indulge himself and allow himself from time to time a brief and passionate enjoyment of what he could not always praise and justify".³ One is forcibly reminded of Montaigne's remark that if restrictions existed for him in some

¹ *Wilhelm Meister*, book viii., chap. v.

² Compare his above-quoted letter to Wilhelm von Humboldt.

³ Book viii., chap. v. Carlyle's translation, vol. ii., p. 93.

distant part of the universe he should feel himself more unhappy on that account. Nor does this observation stand alone as indicating Goethe's occasionally undue deference to prescriptions and impulses which he considered sanctioned by nature. "Man," he continually asserts, "possesses no capacity or tendency without employing and enjoying it." In the same category of extreme theoretical liberty we must also place his ingenuous confession that "there was no crime for which he had not felt in himself a capacity or inclination," presumably at different times.¹ That these subjective limits of speculation and action became somewhat narrower as Goethe advanced in life is only what we might have supposed. The importance of renunciation as a principle of human self-culture became more and more a prominent article in his creed. To enforce it he wrote the second part, or "Wanderjahre" of *Wilhelm Meister*—a work full of significance in its bearing on the later stages of Goethe's own development. But the renunciation we repeat is, like the sense of freedom which it limits, altogether personal and subjective in its nature. Nowhere in Goethe's writings is there any externally derived law, code, or series of principles which have for their object the limitation of a man's own faculties and activities; and how free from all such *ab extra* coercion and restriction Goethe managed to keep his own actions is known to every reader of his life. Indeed every interference from without would have disturbed and perhaps thwarted the placid spontaneous self-development which in his judgment ought to form the true growth of every man, and to which as a standard he certainly tried to conform every stage of his own evolution. In this conception of personal freedom Goethe was a genuine child of the "Sturm und Drang". All the primary impulses of that movement are in truth allied to skepticism. Its impatience with the past, its dislike of traditionalism, its desire for a new, fresher and fuller life, its tendency to break through all existing restrictions, often for no other reason than that they existed, its dissatisfaction arising from the experience that there are limits, personal, social and natural, which are impassable—all were constituent elements in Goethe's idea of liberty and the self-

¹ *Ersch u. Gruber*, p. 236. Goethe's own defence of this extraordinary standpoint may be seen in a review of a work on the chief truths of revelation (*Werke* xii., p. 257).

development based upon it. It is easy to see how his own independent studies of nature confirmed the impression of human freedom with which the *Zeitgeist* had in the first instance inspired him. He is another example of the truth so often exemplified in the history of the human mind that no study exercises such a disintegrating effect on unverified dogmas and opinions or a servile worship of the past as that of nature. In Goethe's philosophy there were two especial aspects of nature which indicated its free teaching. 1. Its infinity. 2. Its unlimited multifariousness, both however possessing analogies in the mind of man. How well Goethe loved to expatiate on these two phases of nature, in what a variety of imagery and beauty of language he was wont to describe them, how forcibly he brought out their teachings for mankind, is well known to his admirers. The infinity of the universe was in itself a guarantee and justification of human freedom.

"To give space for wand'ring, is it
That the world was made so wide."

Nor less significant was nature's measureless diversity, its infinite manifoldness. Important in itself as an inherent aspect of nature it was even more so in relation to man. In human history light without shadow was inconceivable. Time was divided into night and day; man's life was a commingling of virtue and vice, of happiness and misery.¹ Occasionally this divergency assumed the form not of unison but of dissonance and antagonism, which it was the object of art, civilization, religion, in a word of idealism of every kind to subjugate and harmonise. From this dissonance as their original matrix are engendered all Goethe's great characters, *Faust*, *Werther*, *Prometheus*, *Gotz v. Berlichingen*, *Genout*, *Wilhelm Meister*, etc. They are all so many attempts at stating, and if possible solving, the problems raised by man's relation to every aspect of nature and humanity. Not by any means that Goethe was unmindful of the larger generalisations in which smaller differences were, if not finally reconciled, at least temporarily merged and lost. It might almost be doubted whether as a normal condition of his own intellect this synthetic conception of nature in her sublime totality did not

¹ Werke xii., p. 265.

overpower the analysis which took cognisance of her numberless conflicting details. Here the various colours of nature's prism seemed to converge and dissolve in a ray of the purest white light. Nor was this reverence for nature as a whole devoid of that persuasion of sacredness which pertains to religious convictions. Regarded as the sensible source of all movement and vitality, invested by his reason with inherent energies, elevated in his imagination to an ideality, unified by his Spinozism into an ever-present all-power, nature was Goethe's deity. Nor was he ignorant or forgetful of the worship which best befitted this Supreme Being. In harmony with her most distinctive attributes he recognised the truth that no offering was more acceptable to nature than the freedom and the exercise of his manifold powers on the part of her human worshipper. But the arguments already offered do not exhaust all those that might be adduced to prove Goethe's devotion to human liberty. All his principal characters may be described as determinations by means of certain fictitious personages of the scope which he allowed for the exercise of human faculties and activities, especially of the range which he permitted to his own energies. He himself confesses that they are portions of his own individuality, integral parts of his personal thought and experience. They represent the different regions or provinces of which the great human continent called Goethe was composed. Regarded from this his own standpoint, no one can fail to recognise the enormous range of freedom which he required for his own movements, and which he was equally ready to allow in theory to the feelings, energies and actions of his fellow-men.

II. Next to Goethe's sense of freedom we must place among his pro-skeptical impulses his passionate feeling of self-consciousness or individuality. Man, according to his own conception, was a "Nature" possessing within himself an assemblage of divine qualities and tendencies, as well as an innate capacity for co-ordinating them in the mode best suited to his personal self-development. This was indeed a fundamental article in the creed of all the young Titans of the "Sturm und Drang". They all believed themselves at liberty to assert their self-consciousness against whatever power or authority that might seek to influence it from without. This contributed the sole point of argument

among natures in many respects so dissimilar as, for example, those of Goethe, Herder, Schiller, Lavater, and Jung-Stilling. However different the origin and direction of the individuality in each case, all were alike persuaded of its existence and of its right to their unconditional submission. We may, in passing, remember that the "Sturm und Drang" bears in this respect a striking resemblance to the Renaissance as well as to every other epoch of history when men's minds have been profoundly stirred. Its outcome for the individual is ever mental independence, self-concentration, an indomitable sense of personal autonomy. Every great movement of the kind has indeed a twofold tendency, one contrary to the other. In itself and its diffusive energies it is centrifugal, but in respect of those who share and possibly guide it, it will be centripetal as well. By the very rapidity of its motion the stream of thought expends a portion of its energies in eddies and backwaters which react on its own sources, and seem to move in a contrary direction from its own course. Hence Goethe, Herder and Schiller occupy in the "Sturm und Drang" the same position as did Montaigne and Descartes in respect of the French Renaissance or Luther in the religious reformation of Germany. In either case the activities of which they are centres appear to possess a reciprocal influence on themselves, especially in increasing, confirming, extending the individual self-consciousness which probably helped to originate the movement, and which certainly must have contributed largely to its growth. Thus the leaders of the "Sturm und Drang" each for himself made his own self-consciousness the final law and standard of truth, and its due training and development the sole object of his own efforts. Hettner describes the movement as marked by "much foolish singing and talking of the original power and divinity of genius, whose right and duty it was to develop fully and entirely its own existence. From this source came the innocent comical persuasion of each that he himself was such a divine genius that he could recognise no other law of life or of morals than the unlimited autonomy of the inborn I, no matter what its condition, just as it came naked out of the hand of nature, without restraint or moderation, with all its caprices and blind passions."¹ The extreme outcome—we may add, the *reductio*

¹ Hettner, *Geschichte* vol. iii., 1, p. 9.

ad absurdum—of the movement found expression in Schiller's words :—

Dern Recht hat jeder Charakter
Es giebt kein Unrecht als der Widerspruch.¹

But while Goethe himself was a genuine product of the "Sturm und Drang," and highly valued the fresh stimulating character of the movement, he was both averse to and openly ridiculed the extravagances of conduct to which it gave rise in weak and unbalanced natures. Freedom unaccompanied by principles of self-restraint seemed to him dangerous,² but, as we have already seen, he thought such limitation should be the spontaneously generated product of a man's own nature, and not an externally derived and therefore foreign restriction. Goethe, as is well known, had some trouble in confining the passionate self-consciousness of the "Sturm und Drang" within the wide limits he had assigned for its operation. Like Luther in his contest with Carlstadt, he found that he had sanctioned a doctrine whose free proclivities were at once seductive and dangerous. Like another Frankenstein he had conjured up a restless destructive spirit which he was powerless to lay. Not that Goethe was a whit intimidated by this aspect of his favourite doctrine. Like all strong self-contained natures he discriminated between the act and its results, between the doctrine and its possible abuses. If the former were right and true the latter might be left to take care of themselves and to rectify, if need were, their aberrations. Here, too, he trod in the steps of Sokrates who was similarly convinced of the ethical value of self-knowledge. Goethe would probably have succeeded better in restraining the individuality of the "Sturm und Drang" if his own statement of the principle, for example in *Werther*, had not itself been excessive, and if this extreme teaching had not

¹ *Piccolomini*, act iv., scene 6. Coleridge translates the passage thus :—

"For, by the laws of Spirit, in the right
Is every individual character
That acts in strict consistence with itself.
Self-contradiction is the only wrong."

² Compare for example : "Alles, was unsern Geist befreit, ohne uns die Herrschaft über uns selbst zu geben, ist verderblich". *Werke* viii., p. 248. Compare too his estimate of Stern, *Werke* xii., p. 726.

derived confirmation from his own conduct and his contempt for ethical conventionalisms. Men could not avoid seeing that the compensating balance was ineffective to retard the timepiece which spite of its action continued to go too fast. But whatever the defects in the original principle, or in the agency employed for its restriction, Goethe calmly pursued his own course. He concentrated all his effort on developing from within himself, his own nature, in every direction suggested by its own innate manifoldness. Like Faust, he placed first among the formative elements of his own character as well as among the highest excellencies of humanity

die hohe Meinung
Womit der Geist sich selbst umfängt.

This intense but complete personality seems to have been the feature of his character which most struck his friends. Thus Jacobi wrote of him in 1773: "The man is independent or self-contained (*selbständig*) from the crown of his head to the sole of his foot."¹ "I know no man," said Henise of him about the same period, "in the whole history of learned men who, being so young, was so round and full of his own genius." Notwithstanding his own dislike to extraneous agencies in the process of self-evolution, Goethe himself ascribed no small power in determining his mental and spiritual progress to Spinoza. In particular, this great teacher at once deepened, conformed and gave a permanent shape to his sense of self-consciousness. He also helped to co-ordinate and harmonise the heterogeneous elements which in Goethe's earlier life constituted his individuality. His acquaintance with Jacobi pointed in the same direction. Of the latter Goethe said: "He too experienced an inexpressible spiritual want; he too would not have it appeased by foreign help, but would form and enlighten himself out of himself".² This self-growth commended itself all the more to his feelings since it seemed to him the method of God in nature—the means by which chaos was perpetually being self-evolved into an orderly and perfect kosmos. The development was determined from

¹ Quoted in *Ersch und Gruber* (Art. Goethe), p. 264.

² Miss Austin's *Characteristics*, vol. ii., p. 125.

within outwardly, and in its own self-energising power was sufficient for all things.

Was wär' ein Gott der nur von aussen stiesse
Im Kreis das All am Finger laufen liesse ?
Ihn zieht's die Welt im Innern zu bewegen
Natur in Sich, Sich in Natur zu hegen,
So dass was in Ihm lebt, und webt, und ist
Nie Seine Kraft, nie Seinen Geist vermisst.

On this principle the law of nature or the divine in nature became also a law of man. In its mode of development each was autonomous. Nature revealed to man the true law of his being by manifesting herself also as an individuality. The practical outcome of this idea with reference to new truth was to suggest to Goethe some such belief as unconscious cerebration. When he had distinctly grasped a new conception he was satisfied to let it germinate of its own accord. He refused to prescribe its course or to precast its final form.¹ This would have thwarted, possibly destroyed, its own inherent power of growth. He seems to have allowed the same autonomous development to every other faculty of thought and conduct. Nor did he refuse to others what he permitted to himself. Every other man consisted, as he himself did, of a composite individuality, possessing its own standpoint, its own peculiar mode of sensation, power of reasoning, etc. This is a favourite thought of Goethe's, which he has expressed with his usual profundity of insight and wealth of metaphor. For example, we find among his aphoristic reflections the following: "Every man employs the prepared, regulated, elaborated and perfect world as an element out of which he is engaged in creating a particular world suitable for himself. . . . He who feels himself thoroughly penetrated with this ground-truth will strive with no man, but will regard another's mode of representation as just as much a phenomenon as his own. For we find by daily experience that one may befittingly think what is impossible to another's thought, and this too not merely in matters which influence our weal or woe, but on things utterly indifferent to us."² Elsewhere he says: "Every man must think in his own manner, for he always finds on his own path a

¹ *Characteristics*, vol. ii., p. 311. Compare also, p. 266.

² *Werke* viii., p. 261.

truth, or sort of truth, which helps him through life, only he must not let himself go (out of his own power). The purely naked instinct is not befitting to man. . . . Unconditioned energy, of whatever kind, at last makes a man a bankrupt."¹ It will follow as a necessary consequence that the greater the man or the genius, the more marked and manifold the individuality. "Every great genius," he observes, "has his own progress, his own expression, his own tone, his own system, and even his own costume."² Not only did Goethe acknowledge this truth, but he delighted to apply it in detail to his own strangely compounded nature. His wonderful individuality is manifest in his philosophy, his religion, his Art-teaching, his social conduct, in short, in every thought and act of his life. It is this that makes the study of his character so interesting and instructive. Everywhere we find the same massive solidarity, the same self-contained personality, the same equable temperament, the same calm critical disregard of heterogeneous elements in his surroundings which he found himself unable to assimilate into his own thought or life. We note this first in his philosophy. Though he was surrounded by the foremost teachers of the most philosophical epoch in the history of Germany, and was quite capable of entering into the drift of each contemporary system, Goethe's philosophy was his own. He was a follower neither of Kant, nor of Fichte, nor of Jacobi, nor of Schelling, but of Goethe. He allowed his philosophical method—his views on nature and humanity—to grow and expand, to mature and fructify, at their own sweet will, merely giving them the kind of attention a gardener might bestow on a favourite fruit tree. If he could be said to have owned a master in philosophy it was Spinoza. Of none other does he speak in such terms of commendation, to none other does he profess such obligations. The influence which this great teacher exercised on Goethe is probably explicable by the fact that his system is based upon nature and humanity, both of which factors it treats in the idealising manner most congenial to Goethe's own method. In all probability Spinoza found his

¹ *Werke*, viii., p. 242.

² *Werke*, xii., p. 277, speaking of Lavater. The words are the more noteworthy inasmuch as Lavater's nature was diametrically opposed to Goethe's.

greatest disciple on the road to a naturalistic Pantheism, and did little more than confirm his own self-suggested choice. Any other influence Goethe would have disclaimed as alien and heterogeneous. A purely taught philosophy he abhorred, just as he did everything not original and spontaneous. Falk tells us he disliked and distrusted even virtue when laboriously and painfully acquired. Everything learned by rote was distasteful to him, so also was all taught elevation of soul, all praying by rote, etc.¹ All such acquirements seemed to him artificial and external—the sickly and unreal bloom obtained by forcing—not the natural and timely efflorescence of the individual's own character. Nor did he care to systematise even the few speculative certainties on which his mind was made up. Formal cut and dried schemes of philosophy were as repugnant to his freedom-loving nature as religious creeds. In neither case was room allowed for self-development, for individuality, for nature and for liberty. "Every great idea," he said, "operates tyrannically as soon as it has emerged into public recognition. Hence the advantages it brings with it are transformed all too soon into disadvantages. For this reason one may defend and praise a given institution when, with reference to its commencement, he is able to prove that what was true of it in the beginning is true of it now."² Words in which an occult reference to Christianity is clearly intimated. "It is not always necessary," he remarks elsewhere, "that the true should become incarnate. It is fair enough when it hovers around us spiritually and evokes our sympathetic agreement; when, like the sound of bells, it is first wafted to us delightfully through the air."³ These two remarks on unsystematised and undogmatic truth give us a clue to Goethe's individuality in religion. Here also he required room for self-expansion, for spontaneity, for free play to inborn faculties and instincts. As all his admirers know, Goethe possessed in his many-sided conformation a large vein of religious impulse and feeling. His capacity for emotional and imaginative idealism found room for exercise on this sacred territory, as well as in the more secular regions of poetry and philosophy. Before he

¹ *Characteristics*, vol. i., pp. 28, 33.

² *Werke*, viii., p. 253.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 242.

reached the age of twenty he had speculated much on Christianity, and had even gone so far as to attempt an outline of Neo-Platonic thought suited to his own idealistic propensities. But Goethe's Christianity, like every other domain of his culture, was his own. It was as free from alien admixtures of traditional creeds and church systems as his philosophy was from the outwrought schemes of other thinkers. In a well-known passage of his, *Wahrheit und Dichtung*, he tells us that being dissatisfied with the ordinary authorities and presentations of Christianity, he determined to form a Christianity for his own private use, basing it upon the facts of history and the lessons he had derived from nature. Of the scope and character of this Goethean Christianity we are told all that we have a right to ask on the subject in different passages of his writings. It was marked by a supreme respect for the teaching and life of Christ as the true and sole germ of the Christian faith. He especially insisted on the human sympathetic and comprehensive aspects of that primitive teaching. For its purely ecclesiastical and hierarchical developments he cherished an instinctive dislike, despising whatever savoured of excessive austerity, fanaticism and superstition. This however did not prevent his high estimation of particular elements in the chief developments of Christianity prevalent in his time. Thus he revered Protestantism for the freedom and individuality it disseminated among men, while he respected Roman Catholicism for its services to architecture and the fine arts, as well as *inter alia* for its cult of the *Ewig-weibliche* in the person of the Virgin. With this recognition of divers aspects of Christianity as they commended themselves to his own nature, he combined a cordial reverence for the Bible which seems to have increased as he advanced in years. He specially appreciated its many-sided teachings, in which he discerned a similarity to the diversity which he delighted to mark in the utterances of nature. To textual criticism he was indifferent. Thoughts and ideas were to him of infinitely more importance than words. He said that "he cared not how much contradiction might be among the evangelists, provided there was none in the evangel,"¹ an axiom which literalists of all ages would do well to bear in

¹ *Ersch und Gruber, ut supra*, p. 256.

mind. But while rendering due reverence to all that was best and purest in Christianity, Goethe's generalising aptitude is as conspicuous in his religion as in every other province of his thought. Taught, or at least supported, by Spinoza, he universalised religion just as he idealised nature. He regarded it as being in some form a faculty, instinct or susceptibility pertaining to humanity. In some sort it was a spiritualisation of nature—a partaker of its infinite scope and diversity. In this larger exposition of religion “the three reverences” of *Wilhelm Meister's Wanderjahre* find their place, as well as the naturalistic Pantheism which is diffused throughout most of his works. The latter finds its fullest and most poetic expression in the well-known confession of faith with which Faust soothes the tender distrust of Gretchen as to his orthodoxy. But Goethe was by no means averse to the presentation of his nature theology under current forms. Like all great thinkers he was indifferent to words and forms as long as they expressed or contained what seemed to him undoubted truths. Thus he says of the first article of the Creed: “I believe in one God”—“This is a fair and praiseworthy phrase, but to recognise God wherever and however he reveals himself, that is peculiarly man's blessedness on earth”.¹ With theological dogmas, however precisely defined and systematised, Goethe had scant sympathy. For this many reasons might be assigned. He distrusted, as we have seen, all feelings or motives to action that were devoid of inherent vitality or spontaneity. Personal religion was to him too high and sacred to have its impulses and duties directed from without, or based on principles already arranged and made to order. He also disliked the gulf—artificial he thought it—which theologians always maintained to exist between physical science and theology—between nature-knowledge and God-knowledge. Nor did he think that the infinite diversity in Bible teachings could be compressed into a creed. Besides, Goethe saw the truth that in their adoption and result religious dogmas were often the outcome of human selfishness. Men frequently hugged the objects of their belief as they did their money bags, with an eye to their personal advantage, whereas Goethe maintained that the first requisite of all genuine

¹ *Werke*, xii., p. 730.

religion was disinterestedness. He tells us that the doctrine of Spinoza which especially impressed him was that men ought to love God without requiring God to love them in return. Altogether in harmony with this feeling is his remark that piety should be regarded not as an end but as a means, and the very inmost nature of Goethe's development is disclosed by what follows, *viz.*, that the end of piety is to generate and sustain a kind of ataraxia of culture or philosophic calm.¹ His general attitude with respect to dogma, and his preference for feelings, instincts and capacities rather than their definitive products, are strikingly shown by his distinction of faith and knowledge, the prime requisite of the former being that man should believe, *what* he believed being altogether indifferent, whereas in knowledge it was its content, not the fact of knowing, that was of most importance.²

In short, Goethe's religion was, both in its genesis and in its after-growth, marked by his own irrepressible individuality. It was the gradual development from within of his own religious nature. His faith, to use his own words, was "a kind of sacred vessel into which he poured his emotion, his understanding and his imagination".³ It also represented the hallowed, ineffable side of that general idealism which, though based on real things, was ever the goal of Goethe's effort. He found therefore a religious side in nature, in art, in human history, as well as in individuals of many diverse types and tendencies. He delighted to note this diversity among his own circle of friends, as well as to trace it in the history of ecclesiastical or philosophical systems.⁴ He showed its analogy with the phenomena of nature, with the multiform teachings of the Bible, and pointed out its true cause, *viz.*, the manifoldness which must needs follow productivity.⁵ We need not be surprised to find Goethe's religion attacked on this very ground of its cosmopolitan qualities. It was much too broad and many-sided to be comprehended by the average

¹ *Ersch und Gruber*, p. 300.

² *Wahrheit und Dichtung*, book xiv.; *Werke*, vol. ix., p. 527.

³ *Wahrheit und Dichtung*; *Ibid.*

⁴ *Wahrheit und Dichtung*, book viii.; *Werke*, vol. ix., p. 304.

⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 302.

religious dogmatist or sectarian. He manifested sympathy with every genuine expression of the religious thought of his day, even in cases where he was repelled by the extreme development of any particular tendency. With the Moravian Brethren, with the cultured Pietism of Fräulein von Klettenberg, with Lavater and Jung-Stilling, with Kant and Jacobi, as well as with Spinoza, he had some religious affinity. Much of what has been termed his religious indifference was nothing more than the inevitable expression of his many-sidedness. He bore on this point a striking resemblance to Shakespeare both in his broad eclecticism and in the ill-fame which sometimes befell him in consequence.

Equally marked is Goethe's individuality in art. Here also his object was to develop and expand all those inborn powers and sensibilities which might be summed up as his own artistic nature. How great and varied his own artistic qualities were is well known. He was endowed with rare susceptibilities to colour and to colour-harmonies. He had a vivid appreciation of form and outline, and a keen feeling of proportion. Above all, he was gifted with an exquisite sense of beauty and of the simplicity and serenity which in his judgment constituted beauty.¹ To these must be added a tender feeling for nature and a ready sympathetic insight into her different moods and phases. Such was the character of the "nature" which it was his aim to nurture and develop within the limits of its own powers and idiosyncrasies. Roughly speaking, Goethe's artistic development may be divided into two periods, each marked by its own individuality. The former of these, of which he says:—

Da ich noch selbst im Werden war,

¹ Speaking of his obligations in art culture to Oeser, Goethe says: "Sein Unterricht wird auf mein ganzes Leben Folgen haben. Er lehrte mich das Ideal der Schönheit sei *Einfalt und Stille*, und daraus folgt, dass kein Jüngling Meister werden könne." *Ersch und Gruber, ut supra*, p. 242. It may be remarked that Goethe's ideal of beauty was Andrew Marvell's ideal of cultured existence. Admirers of the English poet may be reminded of the lines:—

"Alma Quies teneo te! et te, germana Quietis
Simplicitas! vos ergo diu per templa, per urbes
Quæsivi, regum perque alta palatia, frustra".

consisted of that enthusiastic but tentative and fanciful naturalism which characterised his earlier thought before he came in contact with the teachings of Oeser, Lessing and Spinoza; the latter being the deepening of artistic perceptions, the training of his imagination, in a word the developed idealism which he derived from those teachers. Not that these stages are really separable except as integral parts of the same evolution. Neither in his own case nor in that of others would Goethe have allowed that a real distinction was possible between a man's inborn nature and its development through the teaching of others.¹ The former determined the latter both as to its character and amount, and left the mental personality intact. The difference in Goethe's case seems to have been that the realism which altogether dominated in the first period was qualified by the increasing idealism of the second. It might almost be described as the growing self-assertion of the individual—his sensibility, his taste, his imagination, his increasing many-sided culture—over the material supplied by the outer world. Thus defined, art in relation to nature signified the intelligent grasping, the effective harmonising, the exaltation of nature by means of the idealising faculty of the artist. In the due exercise of that faculty the artist may be said to recreate nature. The object represented is, as it were, separated from its nature-matrix, is re-perceived by the eye, reconceived in the understanding, reshaped and recoloured in the imagination of the artist, receives new birth from his brush or pencil, and thereby becomes invested with a new personality of its own. Goethe's works contain many pithy remarks on this idealising function of art. Thus he says: "Nature and idea cannot be separated without the fatal disruption of art life".² "When artists talk of nature they always understand their own idea of it without being clearly aware of the fact."³ No doubt the stress on idealism indicated by these and similar passages, and which seems to have increased during the latter half of Goethe's life, ought to have modified in some degree what he terms his "stiffnecked realism". But we must bear in mind that even in his most idealising moods the basis of

¹ Compare *Werke*, vol. xii., p. 77.

² *Werke*, vol. xii., p. 13.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 87.

Goethe's art-thought was still realistic. His feet were firmly planted on the ground even though his eyes were directed skyward. Moreover, in his opinion nature herself revealed art-truth to artistic and cultured insight, just as it did knowledge to the physical science inquirer, and God to the theologian. When the genuine artist represented a natural object, "he did not altogether imitate what the eyes saw, but went back to that reasoning principle of which nature consists and according to which it acts".¹ This profound thought he elsewhere expresses in another form. "The highest conception of nature would be to grasp the truth that all the actual is already theory. The blue of the sky reveals to us the ground principle of chromatics. Let man look for nothing behind the phenomena, they themselves are the theory (*sie selbst sind die Lehre*)."² Hence arises a distinction between works of nature and those of art. "The smallest production of nature has the circle of its completeness within itself. . . . A work of art, on the other hand, has its completeness *out of itself*. The best lies in the ideal of the artist, which he seldom or never reaches."³ This passage is important for our purpose because it discloses the outcome of Goethe's art theory and proves its individual character. He clearly asserts the ideal power of the artist over the objects of his craft, and thereby cuts the ground from beneath any general or absolute criterion of art excellence. As we shall see further on, Goethe is quite aware of the skeptical implication of this unlimited individualism in art, but he apparently believes in what might be called the "consensus of the *cognoscenti*" in matters of art. He thinks that general principles of artistic culture, general agreement as to art truth and beauty, may be assumed to exist sufficient, at least, to preserve a given individuality from any extreme eccentricity or artistic falsehood.

But besides the artist's own ideal, there is another principle of art judgment on which Goethe laid much stress. This is also very largely personal, and adds to the individual character of all art criticism. In all artistic excellence there is involved a certain eclecticism. This is partially implied in the artist's own assertion

¹ *Werke*, vol. xii., p. 714.

² *Ibid.*, vol. viii., p. 258.

³ Miss Austin's *Characteristics*, vol. ii., p. 264.

of his highest ideal, for in a lively, pregnant imagination, animated by a many-sided culture, the highest will be only the final selection from a number of high ideals. Goethe especially recognised this faculty and its employment in landscape painting. Here also the ideal was admitted, not to annihilate but to regenerate and beautify what actually existed. Thus Eckermann tells us that Goethe once showed him a landscape of Rubens representing a summer evening, and upon his suggesting that it was a faithful reproduction of nature, Goethe answered: "Certainly not, a picture so perfect is never seen in nature". He further explained his meaning by saying that the painter carried all nature about with him in his memory, and that was why there was so much natural truth in his landscapes. So also in a review of Gessner's *Idylls*, Goethe incidentally thus describes his theory of landscape painting. He says of Gessner: "With the most sensitive eye for the beauties of nature, *i.e.*, for beauteous forms, proportions and colours, he has wandered about picturesque places, has collected them in his imagination, has rebeautified them, and in this way paradisaical landscapes stand before his mind's eye".¹ It is an interesting proof of Goethe's artistic homogeneousness that he applies the same eclectic method to the creation of his dramatic personages. He was once accused of making the chief characters in his *Tasso* copies of the notable persons of the Weimar Court. He repudiated the charge in a letter to Madame Herder, who probably quotes his own words: "The poet portrays a complete character as he appears to him in his soul, but no individual man by himself ever possesses such a complete character".²

This is not the place for commenting on Goethe's art theory and the ideality and eclecticism of which it was so largely composed. All we are here concerned with is the individuality, the distinct self-inclusiveness, which was its distinguishing feature, and which assimilates it to other departments of his thought and life. We might, were it needful, pursue the same characteristic in other directions. For example we might point out the personality traceable in his scientific studies—the peculiar combination of experiment and ideal theorising which renders his

¹ *Werke*, vol. xii., p. 261.

² *Ersch und Gruber, ut supra*, p. 278.

researches like his autobiography, a *Wahrheit und Dichtung*. Von Müller has well remarked of these two tendencies that they "were but branches springing from one and the same mighty radical force—the desire of apprehending both the inner and the outer world in their totality, and of giving them a living form anew out of himself,"¹ in other words, both the experiment and the theory were co-efficients of his individualising tendency in the region of science. We may here add that Goethe's science investigations furnished him with an admirable analogy for his favourite idea of the peculiar development of every natural production. In the evolution of seeds and germs on which he experimented with enthusiasm, he recognised nature's own rudimentary teachings of the individuality everywhere manifested in human history, governing the evolution of thought systems, as well as of animal organisms, and even determining the political, religious and social conditions of mankind.

More strikingly however, than in any province of his thought is Goethe's individuality asserted in the conduct of his life, especially in relation to the female sex. Perhaps it would be too much to say that of set purpose he opposed himself to the social opinions and conventional usages of his time,² for in his own public capacity he was an exact and punctilious observer of all court forms, customs and ceremonies. And yet in the regulation of his private life a marked indifference to public opinion is one of his most prominent characteristics. Here he seems to have allowed no alien influence to disturb, thwart, or modify his own chosen rule of action. As a result some episodes of his life were then, and even now continue to be, objects of reprobation. His *liaisons* with Frau von Stein and Christiani Vulpius, culpable in a young man, were utterly inexcusable in a Privy Councillor of more than forty years old. We must indeed admit that there was a fatal consistency between his theory and his practice in this particular. As we have already observed, he was fully persuaded of the truth of the creed the young Titans of the "Sturm und Drang" professed, *viz.*, that each man should develop for himself his own capacities and instincts in whatever

¹ *Characteristics*, vol. ii., p. 265.

² This has however been said. Compare *Ersch und Gruber*, p. 290.

direction his own nature prompted. Goethe possessed the courage of his opinions and did not scruple to conform his life accordingly. Hence his conduct, like his philosophy, his religion, his artistic activities, was determined from within by his personal sense of right and fitness and not by extrinsic standards whence-soever derived. Whatever therefore be our opinion of Goethe's lax morality we cannot deny that it was an outcome of an individuality—in this case too exuberant and unqualified. In his enthusiasm for self-development of every portion of his humanity, Goethe failed to stop short of the Rubicon which severs private rights from public obligations, and when the individual, in the wanton exercise of his in many respects fair claims, opposes himself to the peace and well-being of the society to which he belongs.

Other examples of Goethe's individualism meet us in his various theories as to politics, literature, etc. Thus Falk tells us that "he regarded the origin of states as something which, like every other product of nature, must unfold itself instinctively and without rule, out of some independently existing germ; to this, indeed, mountains, rivers, climate and other circumstances contribute their share".¹ The evolution of national literature appeared to him to be determined by the same inherent aptitudes, and he delighted to distinguish between the development, literary and artistic, of different countries, as well as to trace, so far as possible, the causes of such peculiarities. Here, too, we discover the reason of Goethe's aversion to all wars, popular commotions, revolutions, and whatever disturbed the placid and timely growth of human culture. He found a refuge from all such dissonances, whether personal or national, in the contemplation of nature. Whatever might be the distracted condition of his own environment, there he found order, quiet, continuous development,—in the words of Von Müller: "In the kingdom of nature he beheld on all sides the peaceful working of plastic powers acting according to fixed laws, the unbroken chain of living development, and throughout even in apparent diversity the revelation of a holy rule".² That this aspect of nature had occasionally its dissonance for Goethe we have already

¹ *Characteristics*, vol. i., p. 93.

² *Ibid.*, vol. ii., p. 275.

seen and shall again have occasion to consider, but isolated and rare catastrophes could not altogether rob him of the mental serenity he derived from the contemplation of nature's general order—the peaceful onward march of her manifold productive-ness.

We have dwelt on Goethe's individuality at some length, both from a conviction that it contains a clue to many apparent anomalies in his character, and also because it throws light on his pro-skeptical tendencies. Not that decisive self-assertion is in itself an invariable mark of skepticism, but that in combination with other qualities, as for example an innate love of liberty, its propensities are decidedly skeptical. Indeed no great skeptic has ever appeared who has not been characterised by self-concentration, and those who have founded schools, as for example Sokrates and Descartes, have made self-knowledge or individualism the basis of their system. As to Goethe it might be said that in more than one region, when his individuality was most pronounced, he has always been regarded as skeptical, for example in religion and in respect of social usages. Nor is the consideration of this element in Goethe's character unimportant considered as a preliminary to the study of *Faust*, for whoever has carefully considered that personage must be aware that it is surcharged with Goethean ideas of individualism. The drama is in fact the representation from its author's standpoint of a given nature, though whether its development be true in all points may be doubted.

III. We must now examine the obverse of the medal. Self-consciousness, individuality, is in its character and mode of operation a kind of synthesis. Its aim is constructive and integrating, at least with respect to its possessor. It only assumes a dissonant aspect when placed in relation to other individualities, to alien systems and thoughts. Of a more directly skeptical tendency is the self-analysis which perpetually watches and criticises the different syntheses and constructions which the human mind is ever forming in philosophy, religion, art and other provinces of intellectual activity. In Goethe, as in most great natures, both complemental qualities are found so evenly balanced that it is hard to decide which has the preponderance. The harmony and completeness of his character we have already

noticed. Probably few great natures ever attained such massive and homogeneous solidarity. In few has the development— notwithstanding the movement that must always attend growth—been accompanied by such cohesion and uniformity. Yet in reality Goethe's nature, when scrutinised, reveals division and disparity. The general harmony is largely made up of musical discords. The unbroken surface, like the rind of some fruit, covers lines of cleavage and well-marked divisions within. This was in truth an inevitable outcome of his intense self-consciousness, for however ardently he was impelled on the path of reason, imagination, or passion, he never lost the feeling of his own Goethean personality. The reflective discriminating moiety of his being was perpetually criticising his impulsive and active moiety. The thinker watched the actor, the critic interrogated the thinker, not, as in Hamlet's case, in such a manner as to nullify his power of action, but so as to confine his energies within due and reasonable limit. Similarly, the realist in Goethe watched the idealist, the philosopher, sometimes the cynic, vivisected the poet. In a word, each constructive faculty, whatever its origin or direction, was liable to have its syntheses tested by some solvent agency suitable for the purpose. Thus the individual was never merged and lost in the active or passive energy he had himself helped to create, as an engineer might lose control over the mechanism he himself had designed. Goethe's self-consciousness is not only a whole, an unity in itself, but is capable of criticising and controlling each of the many faculties of which it is compounded.

The importance Goethe attached to self-analysis, whether in nature or in man, is manifested from various portions of his writings. He recognises the process on the largest scale in the manifold interaction of the laws and operations of nature. Thus in his *Betrachtungen im Sinne der Wanderer*¹ he says: "It is a prime quality of the living unity to sever itself, to reunite itself, to project itself into the general, to continue in the particular, to transform itself, to specialise itself. Thus the living may under a thousand conditions so appear as to emerge forth or to vanish, to become solid or to melt, to be hard or fluid,

¹ *Wilhelm Meister, Wanderjahre*, book ii.; *Werke*, vol. viii., pp. 257, 258.

to expand or draw itself together. Now since all these operations occur simultaneously, so may all and each happen at the same time. Growth and decay, creation and annihilation, birth and death, joy and sorrow, every one operates through each other in the same sense and in equal proportion. For this reason what is most singular may present itself as an image or symbol of what is most general." This analysing function of nature, as a whole, keeping pace with and conditioning her eternally constructive processes, is a truth which Goethe applies to physical research. "If," he observes, "existence in its totality is an eternal loosing and binding, it follows that men in contemplating the immense object will sometimes loose (analyse) and sometimes bind."¹ But man, according to Goethe, has the right to apply the same disintegrating process to his own mental synthesis. He said of Lavater: "He who feels within him a truly pregnant synthesis has peculiarly the right to analyse it, because he proves and establishes his inward whole by his outward individual parts."² That Goethe was fond of analysing his own fruitful syntheses is very evident. His self-criticism betrays itself in every department of his thought and feeling, from the simplest act of the senses to the highest reaches of imagination and passion. It is this faculty which intensifies and brings into prominence his many-sidedness, since every manifold nature, if gifted with self-discrimination, must needs express itself in a manifold manner. Now Goethe was not only analytical in the sense of comprehending in a single glance two opposite aspects of the same subject, but in that of discriminating the multiple aspects that pertain to most subjects. He was not only "two-eyed," to use the expressive Greek term, but he had something of the hundred-eyed vision of the fabled Argos. Nor was Goethe unconscious of this peculiar manifoldness of his own nature. He both recognised and cultivated it. His zeal for developing in its turn and measure every natural power, no matter what its origin and direction, was partly the cause of that contempt for conventional theories on ethics which we have already noticed. Of the innumerable compliments he received,

¹ *Wilhelm Meister, Wanderjahre*, book ii. ; *Werke*, vol. vii., pp. 257, 258.

² *Werke*, vol. ix., p. 642.

probably the one which best pleased him was that of "panoramic ability," with which some English admirer credited him. So persuaded was he himself of the truth of this eulogium that he wasted much valuable time in the earlier half of his life in a futile attempt to acquire the arts of oil-painting and sketching from nature, for which he seems to have had but little talent. Moreover, he applied the same criterion to other men. The degree of panoramic ability possessed by any man constituted the measure of his excellence in Goethe's estimation, since the more many-sided any given character the more closely did he approximate to the variety discernible in nature, in humanity as a whole, in the Bible, etc. Everywhere, to use his own words, "universality is desirable, while singularity is repellent". It is perhaps needless to point out how all his dramatic creations are marked by this same multiplicity. Their manifoldness is indeed an inevitable result of the eclecticism which, as we have seen, he employed in their construction. "Faust," the highest and most elaborated of them all, is especially distinguished in this respect. While Wagner, the pedant and dogmatist, has only his single capacity, and is impatient of every other, Faust is conscious not only of two, but of opposite and conflicting natures.

Zwei Seelen wohnen auch in meiner Brust
Die eine will sich von der andern trennen,

and many other passages testify both to the multiplicity of his nature and his power of self-analysis. We shall see further on how the same conception coloured Goethe's notions of truth and truth-search, and how much of eclecticism was thereby imparted to his intellectual operations. At present we may content ourselves with a brief sketch of the general range of his analysing instincts. Although he did not care to dissect sense-impressions after the manner of a Greek skeptic and in the interests of pure truth or falsehood, he was always alive to their artistic significance. He said that in the interests of art men needed a *critique* of the senses analogous to that which Kant instituted of the pure reason. The observation is interesting as bearing on his æsthetic development. It betrays the incessant discipline and watchfulness to which for artistic purposes he subjected his sense-impressions, the care with which he discriminated between their pictorial or ideal aspects—*i.e.*, those capable of further elaboration

by reason or imagination—and those ill adapted for such purposes. Still more marked and general is his vivisection of reason. Probably the work among all contemporaneous treatises on philosophy which most arrested Goethe's attention was Kant's *Kritik*, though he was more interested in its larger results than in the metaphysical processes by which these were attained. The work ministered to his analytical propensities just as Spinoza's writings did to his synthetic impulses. He proposed to apply the same critical method not only to the senses but to the understanding and to the general "common sense" (*Gemeinverstand*) which is the ordinary basis of human action as well as of popular speculation.¹ But independently of his philosophic studies and theories, Goethe everywhere manifests a tendency to analyse the mental faculties and to question their infallibility. Introspection has taught him that there is in man a principle of dissonance or contradiction²—a parallel to the dissonance observable in certain aspects of nature. He is quite aware that reason has in common with the rest of man's highest faculties its obverse. The opinion of Satan in the "Prologue in Heaven" of *Faust* as to the depraved use men make of the "Divine Light" of reason occurs in other portions of Goethe's works.³ We have also many skeptical intimations of its weakness, uncertainty and limitation. The principle of renunciation already spoken of, on which he insisted so strongly, was only this conviction of human limitation elevated into an ethical principle. It was the Nemesis that dogged with inevitable step the buoyant creations of the intellect and the lofty aspirations of the fancy. Nor was this Goethe's sole method of limiting within due bounds the forward impulses of the reason. His "stiff-necked realism" furnished him with an ever-ready principle well adapted for testing the outcome of elaborate mental processes. This was his *ultima ratio* in theology, in philosophy, in art, and in short in every domain of

¹ *Werke*, vol. xii., p. 738.

² "Wir können einem Widerspruch in uns selbst nicht entgehen; wir müssen ihn auszugleichen suchen. Wenn uns andere widersprechen, das geht uns Nichts an, das ist ihre Sache." *Werke*, vol. xii., p. 700. So he says in his *Wahrheit und Dichtung* (*Werke*, vol. ix., p. 302): "Der Geist des Widerspruchs und die Lust zum Paradoxen steckt in uns allen".

³ Compare for example *Werke*, vol. xii., p. 50.

his intellectual or practical life. One result of this realistic analysis was that Goethe presented a front of experimental rationalism to the extreme idealism of Fichte and Jacobi, to the one-sided religionism of Lavater and Jung-Stilling, to the superstitions of Catholics, and to the bibliolatriy of Protestants. Moreover he had an instinctive love for simplicity and directness in all mental operations, which also acted as a powerful solvent of some products of the human reason. Thus he acquired early in life an insuperable dislike to formal logic as a cumbrous method of performing intellectual operations which most sane men find no difficulty in accomplishing without its aid. The ironical advice of Mephistopheles to the student to lace up his mind in the Spanish boots of college logic is only a striking mode of expressing Goethe's hearty aversion to the so-called science, together with all the formality and pedantry of which it was the source.

The vigorous analytic which Goethe applied to religious dogmas is well known. *Faust* will afford us many examples of it. Not that the analytic was always and necessarily destructive. Often it was no more than a kind of chemical experiment. The resolution of a compound into its simplest elements—disintegration for the purpose of reintegration. Goethe's was not a nature to receive without minute analysis a dogma or belief which had no other than an extrinsic or traditional authority. As we have already seen, he required his religion to be the product of his own emotional and spiritual development, and few students of Goethe are aware of the profound depths to which his religious feelings were capable of penetrating. Here again his realism came in as a mode of analysis and as forming a basis and test of religious emotions. He might respect, he could never receive, convictions and experiences for which he failed to discern an adequate foundation in nature and humanity without, or in his own needs, feelings and capacities within. The only point on which he allowed his reason to penetrate into mystic regions beyond the scope of his personal experience was in his devotion to Spinozism. Here he was penetrated by the infinitude of the universe, by the eternal persistency and manifold activity of its energies. Still this final synthesis does not diminish the fact that Goethe's method in religion was largely analytic. We might indeed say

that synthesis or construction is his favourite mode of presenting formally the results of his analyses, just as a chemist sums up in a comprehensive formula the final results of his experiments and disintegrations.

Goethe applied the same critical method to the products of his imagination and his theories on art. His dramatic creations, though, as we have seen, prejudicially affected by his cosmic imagination, nevertheless exemplify the truth that the best, nay, the only effective means of acquiring the art of human character-dissection is to practise that of self-analysis. He himself used to say that he had never written what he had not experienced, *i.e.*, either in his own personality or in that of other men with whom he had come in contact. In the latter case his experience of alien natures was always reconceived and reshaped in his own mind, and therefore came under the operation of the perpetual vivisection to which all his thoughts and fancies were submitted. How closely the exercise of this faculty was related to Goethe's ideas as to the infinite variety existing among men we need not point out. If the analysis was the instrument by which the diversity was discoverable, the latter constituted the material on which the former operated and by means of which its dissecting edge was maintained at its necessary degree of keenness. Similar features mark Goethe's relation to art. The highest conception of artistic beauty he defined as 'an union of nature and idea somewhat like that existing between man's soul and body. Each was indispensable to the other, though in the highest artistic creations nature must always be subordinate to ideality as the body is to the soul of a wise man. It was hardly more than a corollary from these premisses that the absolute in art was as indeterminate as the absolute in philosophy. Both the sublimest conception and the highest reach of artistic excellence must needs be individual and subjective. Many passages in *Wilhelm Meister* and in the *Kunst und Literatur* might be adduced in proof of this artistic skepticism on the part of Goethe. For instance, the test of absolute perfection propounded to his pupils by the Statuary "Superior" in *Wilhelm Meister's Wanderjahre* is this: "Is there any of you who, in presence of this stationary work, can with gifted words so awaken our imagination that all we here see concreted shall again become fluid without losing its

character, and so convince us that what our artist has here laid hold of was indeed the worthiest?"¹—precisely the process, it may be added, which the skeptic applies to the conceivable disintegration of philosophical systems and of religious dogmas. The success of the experiment, though Goethe only considers it from an artistic point of view, would seem to show that he distrusted absolute finality in art just as much as in philosophy or in science. Nor is this the only example of what may be termed destructive analysis in Goethe's art teaching. He lays it down that since man is an unity of manifold inwardly conjoined powers, art must appeal to this wholeness, it must express this rich unity, this single multiplicity that is in him.² We must however remember that here, as always, Goethe's analysis culminates in a synthesis, though this may possibly be only formal and relative. Art must have some standard or criterion of excellence however exposed to disintegration from its necessary individuality in final analysis. Thus: "Imagination is in itself a vague unstable power, which the whole merit of the plastic artist consists in more and more determining, fixing, nay, at last exalting to visible presence".³ Even the conventional in art is of value, as it consists of the judgments of the foremost artists and critics. An external standard is moreover afforded us by nature:—

Wie Natur im Vielgebilde
 Einen Gott nur offenbart,
 So im weitem Kunstegefilde
 Webt ein Sinn der ewgen Art:
 Dieses ist der Sinn der Wahrheit
 Der sich nur mit Schönerm schmückt
 Und getrost der höchsten Klarheit
 Hellsten Tags entgegen blickt;⁴

while a further limit to capricious lawless individuality is found in the fact that those who have most genius or native talent are always the most anxious to submit to canons of art, though this

¹ Carlyle's translation, vol. ii., p. 255. Goethe has employed the same illustration in a previous passage (p. 119).

² *Werke*, vol. xii., p. 48.

³ *Ibid.*, vol. viii., p. 211; Carlyle's translation, vol. ii., p. 251.

⁴ *Werke*, vol. viii., p. 216.

is a rule which clearly applies only to the elementary teachings and not to the highest provinces of art culture and æsthetic taste.

Perhaps, however, the domain in which Goethe's aptitude for self-analysis is most forcibly exhibited is in that of passion. The power of his amatory inclinations throughout the whole of his long life is one of the best attested facts of his character. But it is very remarkable that in all his varied love affairs his passion never transcends his own careful scrutiny of its impulses. It is now admitted by all competent critics that the Mephistopheles who sneers at Faust's passion for Gretchen, as well as the Faust who feels the passion, had both their origin in Goethe's own nature. Like Heine and Byron he was in a great degree a skeptic in love. Nor is this only the judgment of outside critics. Both his own writings and the correspondence published since his death clearly prove that in all his love episodes there was a spice of retrospection, of self-analysis, sometimes even of cynicism. Mephistopheles follows Faust, just as Faust pursues Gretchen. One of his most trustworthy biographers assures us that he regarded women very much as objects of psychological observation. He took especial note of their loves and hatreds, for in these they were sincere. On the other hand:—

Wenn sie aber urtheilen und meinen
Da will's oft wunderlich erscheinen.¹

He also considered them, together with the passion they stirred in his susceptible bosom, from the utilitarian standpoint of incentives to poetic production, and he seems to have sought their society and tried to awaken their interest with that object in view. Mr. Lewes, alluding to the well-known denial of Wilkes that he had ever been a Wilkite, says that Goethe was never a Wertherite, and it is manifest, both from his own testimony as well as from other sources, that his pretended passion for Lotte had never been so vehement as it is represented in Werther. It seems indeed very difficult to exonerate Goethe from a charge of narrowness and selfishness in his dealings with women. Cultured and accomplished women he disliked, and his favourites of the sex, with the single exception of Frau von Stein, were more

¹ Compare *Ersch und Gruber, ut supra*, p. 243.

remarkable for natural simplicity, grace and tenderness than for mental endowments. In his life the type is best represented by Christiani Vulpius, and in his writings by the immortal Gretchen of *Faust*. Of his inflammable nature there can be no question, but the depth and sincerity of his passion are certainly open to doubt. Few readers of the *Wahrheit und Dichtung* can have failed to notice the undertone of vanity with which Goethe, when an old man, recounts the love-affairs of his life. He evidently regarded the passion as a matter of more interest than the objects of it. This is incidentally proved by his *naïve* remark: "It is a very pleasant feeling when a new passion begins to stir in us before the old has disappeared"—a maxim curiously opposed to the old English proverb:—

'Tis good to be off with the old love
Before you are on with the new.

We need not stay to point out how the true significance of this confession is borne out by more than one episode in Goethe's life, and especially by his cold-hearted cruelty to Frederika Briori.¹ We have stated enough to prove that his customary self-analysis is as conspicuous in his passions as in his other convictions and feelings. So far we must admit there is an unquestionable consistency in the different phases and elements of his nature.

IV. No small insight into the complex character both of Goethe and Faust, and consequently into the skepticism of each, is obtained by reviewing the chief personages of Goethe's works. For if it be true, as has often been alleged, that "Faust is Goethe," it is also true that, like his creator, Faust is a compendium of all Goethe's chief dramatic characters. We find in him the Titanism of Prometheus and of Götz von Berlichingen, the *Weltschmerz* and despair of Werther, the search for culture of Wilhelm Meister, the popular sympathies of Prometheus and Genout, in addition to his own peculiarity of inquiring skepticism. We may bestow a passing glance at each of them in its turn.

¹ Of this unworthy episode in Goethe's life, one of his recent critics has remarked: "Man wollte ihm vieles verzeihen aber das Herz eines solchen Mädchens gebrochen zu haben, war eine Unmenschlichkeit. In jenem selben Sommer schrieb Herder an Goethe, dass er ihm eines wahren Enthusiasmus gar nicht für fähig halte." H. Grimm, *Vorlesungen*, etc., i., p. 80.

Goethe repeatedly confesses the fascination which the root-thought of Titanism exercised on him. As we have seen, it was the spirit of the age; the leaven which fermented in the "Sturm und Drang". He thus describes in the *Wahrheit und Dichtung* the origin of the idea in his own spiritual evolution: "I had often enough experienced in my youth that in the moments of our uttermost need a voice cried aloud to us: 'Physician, cure thyself!' and how often was I not forced in bitterness of heart to sigh: 'I must tread the winepress alone'. . . . When I looked around for some support to my self-dependence, I found that its surest foundation was my productive talent. . . . I willingly sought to make this gift the ground or basis of my whole existence. This notion transformed itself into an image. The old myth of Prometheus occurred to me," etc. Like most thought-germs which took possession of Goethe's fertile intellect, the idea proved prolific. Man's self-isolation, his equality with deity, his independence and self-reliance, various phases and directions of human aspiration were among the products of this Promethean fire. But though Goethe thus manifested an elective affinity for the Prometheus myth, he adopted chiefly those portions of it which suited his own temperament and mode of thought. He did not put forward any more than did Aeschylus the gigantic, violent, heaven-storming phase of Titanism. He himself tells us: "The Titanic heaven-attacking character afforded no material for my vein of poetry. Rather did it suit me to depict that peaceful, plastic and ever-patient resistance which owns a superior power, but seeks to equal it. Yet even the more daring of the Titan race were my saints. Received into the society of the gods, they would not behave obsequiously enough, incurred the anger of their hosts and patrons as insolent guests, and drew upon themselves a miserable sentence of condemnation. I pity them," etc.¹ The various directions in which the Prometheus myth operated in the mind of Goethe are sufficiently indicated by the different forms it assumed in his works. In *Götz von Berlichingen*, for example, the idea is represented by the struggle of the hero against feudal oppression, and in favour of popular liberty. In the monologue of "Prometheus" Goethe sums up in an intensified

¹ *Characteristics*, vol. i., p. 260.

form all the antitheistic and philanthropic elements which could by any possibility be attributed to Prometheus. The drama of the same name consists especially of those two features of the myth which are most prominent in the play of Aeschylus, *viz.*, 1, defiance of the gods; 2, sympathy with men. Still the theme is here enlarged, and other characteristics taken from the oldest form of the Greek myth—for example, Prometheus as creator of man—are incorporated. In the series of poems which from their treatment of different aspects of the same subject may well be called Promethean, for example, “Ganymede,” “Grenzen der Menschheit,” and “Das Göttliche,” he deals with human aspirations, ideal and moral beauty, the divinity of humanity, themes which might all be summed up in the two lines:—

Nur allein der Mensch
Vermag das Unmögliche.

But in its highest and most Goethean development the idea is seen in *Faust*. Indeed, the two dramas of *Prometheus* and *Faust* were wrought out at the same time, and beneath the inevitable distinction between the great hero of Greek mythology and the chief character of mediæval devil-legends, striking similarities may be discerned. Like Prometheus, Faust has abjured what might be called supernatural authority. It is true that God, probably in virtue of his persistent striving after truth, calls Faust his servant, but the latter makes no overt profession of allegiance to him. On the contrary, much of Faust's discontent is based on an outspoken incrimination of the divine arrangements, both in man and in the universe. As to powers of evil, he expressly defies them. He is no more alarmed at the misanthropic powers of hell than Prometheus cares for the similar designs of Zeus. Besides, Faust is just as independent and self-reliant as his Greek prototype. He also resembles the Titan in his philanthropy. He desires more knowledge, not merely for his personal enlightenment, but to advantage mankind, and part of his complaint against the seeming knowledge he has acquired is that it is useless for the latter purpose.

No doubt Titanism in its most general sense of discontent with the arrangements of the universe enters largely into the ground-thought of *Werther*, yet the prevailing sentiment of that work is a half imbecile—*Weltschmerz*—an unreasonable and

unreasoning disgust with the laws and facts of mundane existence. For we must remember there may be a justifiable as well as an unjustifiable *Weltschmerz*. The sentiment may be combined with, if not grounded upon, the *Sehnsucht*—the yearning for the absolute or the true—which must form an essential feature of every complete thinker. It may be based on incongruities in nature, or, as in Hamlet's case, on the unjust operation with regard to humanity of the laws of the universe; or on the other hand, it may have no worthier source than the peevish petty vanity, or the extravagant passion, of the individual who professes to suffer it. In a word, the feeling may be broad, generous, disinterested, or it may be mean, narrow, selfish and absurd. Each has its own exponent among Goethe's dramatic creations, for while Faust may stand for the former, the latter is represented by the immortal but pitiful Werther. There is indeed ample ground for concluding that both one and the other represent stages in Goethe's own development. The immense power which the conception of Werther exercised on him at one period of his life is well known, nor is it hard to account for. The idea formed a meeting point of various influences which Goethe derived partly from the spirit of the time, partly from his own nature. Werther was above all things the gospel of the "Sturm und Drang". It represented the malcontent, insurrectionary spirit of that movement. It portrayed its maudlin sentimentalism, its irrepressible "gush," if we may use the word. It indicated the impatience of social, legal and ethical restrictions which marked it. It typified the immeasurable and irrepressible yearning of its teachers. Nor less was it an outlet for the pessimism which Goethe had derived partly from his own exuberant imagination, his ebullient and passionate nature, partly from the instruction of pessimistic teachers, as for example Behrisch and Marek. Moreover, it formed the pendant in the region of human sentiment and passion to the more intellectual *Weltschmerz* of Faust—a character which he had begun to elaborate even before the date of Werther. He himself attests in vigorous terms the hold which the latter work had on him during the period of its conception. He once told Eckermann that Werther was "a creation which he, pelican-like, had nourished with his own heart's blood". Not that this implies

that Goethe himself was so immersed in the passion of Werther as to have quite lost his power of self-analysis or self-consciousness; it merely signifies that he remoulded and intensified the elements of passion given by his own experience until they assumed the artistic form given in Werther. Now the *Weltschmerz* of Faust, as we have observed, is of the nobler kind. For the most part it is not based on purely personal grounds but on broad comprehensive views of humanity and its relation to the universe. It is engendered by intellectual needs, not by sexual passion, and for this reason represents better than Werther the emotional side of Goethe's character and aspiration. Yet it is remarkable that he sometimes treated even this nobler sentiment with cynicism. Thus in the *Wahrheit und Dichtung* we find him sneering at Jerusalem (the prototype of Werther) for indulging in the philosophical yearning of Faust. "If now, as they say, the greatest happiness rests in a sense of longing (*Sehnsucht*), and if the genuine longing can only be directed to something unattainable, everything had fallen together to render the youth whom we now accompany on his wanderings the happiest of mortals"¹—an observation which we may take as exemplifying either Goethe's occasional self-analysis of cherished moods and beliefs, or else his general impatience of transcendental thought, of which we have already spoken. We may probably take Faust's ordinary mood of reasoned dissatisfaction with the conditions of existence and of truth-search as nearly resembling Goethe's general attitude towards the same facts. This need not prevent our admission that the pessimism of Faust assumes occasionally an extreme form hardly different from the petty sentiment of Werther, since it is evident that even in the better ordered and self-renunciatory portion of his development Goethe was not quite free from occasional relapses into the excessive sentimentalism of his Werther-period. Certainly the truth searcher who, in despair of attaining the object of his quest, takes the goblet of poison into his hands cannot be said to be removed by an immeasurable distance from the weak-minded hypochondriac who shoots himself for the sake of Lotte. Nor is the distinction much greater when we bear in mind the mystical

¹ Book xii. Oxenford's translation, vol. i., p. 474.

yearning of Faust for a freer and fuller existence than that of earth, since Werther also shares some vague hopes of a greater liberty after death, as well as a closer union with Lotte in a spiritual world. Besides this similarity in respect of suicidal propensities the pessimism of Faust appears to approach in its excessive form the uncontrollable passion of Werther in another scene, *viz.*, that which contains his wholesale malediction of all the pleasures and ties of human existence. Still these parallels of thought and action between Werther and Faust must not make us forget the fundamental distinction which demarcates them, for the genius and method of Werther is negation while that of Faust is generally suspense or effort. The one struggles with the problems of existence, devises new methods for their solution. The other solves the riddle in Buddhist fashion by terminating, so far as possible, his own consciousness of existence.

Wilhelm Meister is another character which throws much light both on Goethe's own development and on the true meaning of Faust, while it also presents remarkable affinities to Werther. The *Lehrjahre* teaches the same lesson with reference to art and culture as Faust does with regard to intellectual truth and Werther with respect to the physical passion of love. Like Faust it is a record of human effort and aspiration thwarted by error but sustained and ennobled by persistency. That this is the moral of the work is testified by Goethe himself. In his *Tag- und Jahres-heften* he says: "The beginnings of Wilhelm Meister form an obscure presentiment of the great truth that man may frequently attempt something for which nature denies him the capacity; he may undertake and employ himself about that for which he has no talent. An inward feeling warns him to abstain; still he cannot come to terms with himself, and he is impelled along false ways to false objects without knowing how it will turn out. To this we may attribute all that which is called false tendency, dilettantism, etc. If sometimes a light—a bright light—appears to him on the subject, there is stirred within him a feeling akin to despair, and yet he allows himself to be hurried onward by his impulses, only offering them a half-resistance. Very many waste in this way the fairest portion of their life and sink at last into a wonderful melancholy. And yet it is possible that all the false steps may finally lead up to

some inestimable advantage." This feeling, which in Wilhelm Meister is perpetually unfolded, illustrated and established, is at last avowed with outspoken words: "Thou seemest to me like Saul, the son of Kish, who went forth to seek his father's asses, and found a kingdom".¹ The idea thus described is evidently applicable in some degree both to Werther and Faust. Wilhelm pursues an unsuitable culture or talent just as Werther cherishes an unavailable passion, or Faust pursues unattainable truth.² The chief distinction between Wilhelm Meister and Faust turns on the value of renunciation, the discovery of the bounds of human effort and capacity, and acquiescence in their restrictions. This is manifestly easier when the "self-denying ordinance" relates to the limits of a man's artistic ability rather than to the bounds of general human knowledge. There is therefore an end of Wilhelm Meister's "Streben," while there is no terrestrial limit to that of Faust. Hence if Wilhelm resembles Saul in going forth to seek his father's asses and finding a kingdom, we might say of Faust that he starts in quest of a kingdom and finds only a few stray asses on his way, or, employing Goethe's own simile, he gropes for treasure and finds only earthworms. The skeptical import of the conception arises partly from the fact that it is an inquiry directed to an unattainable object, and that it is only by the peremptory resolution of the inquirer that the search stops short of its anticipated goal. Supposing a similar expedient admissible in the case of ardent ideal truth-search, it might be described in similar terms. The cynic or satirist might pronounce of all seekers after the infinite, the absolute, the *Ding an sich*, etc., who gave up the quest in despair, that they too went forth to seek asses but found a kingdom. But secondly, another skeptical implication of Wilhelm Meister is that he is an opponent of traditional ideas of culture, especially artistic and dramatic. The existing creeds and opinions of the æsthetic world he despises and rejects. By means of the tuition of cultured friends, by continual reflection and ever-widening experience, and not least by the study of Shakespeare, he attains a new artistic standpoint which is far removed from the art ideas which obtained in Germany prior to the time of Lessing. Perhaps, too, we ought

¹ Compare *Ersch und Gruber*, *ut supra*, p. 308.

² See on this point Hettner, *Geschichte*, vol. iii., 3, p. 114.

to comprehend with the *Lehrjahre* the *Wanderjahre* as forming the complete individuality of Wilhelm Meister. But so doing we enlarge indefinitely the province of the hero's "Streben". Other influences, parental, social, religious, etc., have to be taken into account as cultural agencies. Hence the education of the individual and the full scope of his effort assume gradually that infinity of aspect which is one main characteristic of genuine skeptical and unlimited search, and Wilhelm Meister is thus unconsciously transmuted into a kind of Faust of culture.

V. Besides the larger considerations already enumerated for estimating the character of Goethe and its bearing on his chief creation of "Faust," there are lesser arguments attesting Goethe's skepticism, and throwing light on its reproduction in his greatest drama.

1. Goethe's peculiar fitness for exploring physical science, formerly disputed, is now conceded by all critics whose opinion on the subject is worth having. He possessed the patient observation, the reliance on careful experiment, the aversion to hasty theorising, the instinct for co-ordinating numerous facts into a general law, which collectively mark the highest scientific genius. But with all his stress on the methods of science, and notwithstanding his occasional dogmatism as to his own discoveries, he was, on the whole, profoundly impressed with the limited and uncertain nature of scientific knowledge. Indeed his opinion on the subject is nearly as strong as that put in the mouth of Faust. Thus we find him reviewing his own labours towards the close of his life: "If I were to write down the sum of all that is worth knowing in the various sciences with which I have employed myself throughout my life, the manuscript would be so small that you might carry it home in your pocket in the cover of a letter". He continues: "The chapter of electricity is that which in modern times has, according to my judgment, been handled the best".¹ Yet electricity was with Goethe a favourite illustration of human ignorance. Among the pithy maxims in which he was wont to concentrate the wisdom of his life we find this: "Who knows anything about electricity, says a merry nature-searcher, except when he strokes a cat in the dark, or when

¹ *Characteristics*, vol. i., p. 41.

lightning and thunder are gleaming and rattling about him? How much and how little knows he of it then?"¹ He himself becomes more convinced the further he advances in natural science that its progress is attended with error, that each step forward is accompanied by a step backward, and that it is impossible to free science from even recognised errors.² Another property of natural science not tending to certitude is that we cannot fittingly describe many of its problems without calling to our aid metaphysics, not, indeed, that school- and word-wisdom commonly signified by the term, but that which was, is, and will be, before, with, and after physics—a profound remark whose implication is too often forgotten in the present day. Goethe's cautious attitude with respect to science is further borne out by his general opinions on truth and error. "Truth," said Goethe, "is like God, we cannot know it in itself but only in its manifestation; the result being that its recognition must depend on the receptive powers of those who discern it." Not less personal and individualistic is his definition of subjective truth: "If I know my relation to myself and to the outer world I call it truth. Hence every man may possess his own truth, and yet is it always the same," *i.e.*, it may be presumed, in idea, or subjective relation. Like Shakespeare he admits that truth has to human observers a blinding or scorching effect. "It is a torch, but an enormous one, for which reason we approach it blinking, and are afraid of burning ourselves." In the same spirit he speaks of his scientific discoveries: "To me it has befallen in the pursuit of science as one who rises early in the dim light of the dawn and who impatiently expects the sun, and yet when it comes forth he is blinded". Another difficulty in respect of truth-attainment arises from its simplicity. In this consists its discrimination from error, which is always compound and multiple. In one respect "truth contradicts our nature while error does not. For truth demands that we must know ourselves as limited; error, on the contrary, flatters us that we are in some way or other unlimited." But notwithstanding its perversity, illusiveness and difficulty of attainment, the persistent search for truth is the mark of the noblest intellect, since "love of truth is the first and

¹ *Werke*, vol. viii., p. 401.² *Ibid.*, p. 254.

last requirement of genius". Elsewhere he defines this passion as "knowing how to find and treasure the good everywhere". We are thus reminded not to lay too much stress on Goethe's professed dislike of the ceaseless controversy of extreme idealists and skeptics, for it is evident that in some moods he extended to those standpoints a sympathetic recognition. He declares, for example, that it is necessary that men should regard the inconceivable as conceivable, otherwise *they would not search*; and in another place he pronounces the inconceivable useful as an object of thought because it is "free from the narrow implication which belongs to every particular that is conceivable". Doubtless Goethe would have readily applied to himself the words of the stranger in the first book of *Wilhelm Meister*: "I attempted to form for myself some not impossible conception of things which are incomprehensible to all of us". However much he might have limited in actual operations the disposition thus described, there is no great difference between it and the tendency to extreme skepticism which he deprecates in others.

2. More directly, though perhaps inconsistently, Goethe's virtual skepticism is disclosed by his opinions on doubt and the limitation of human knowledge. We have already had occasion to touch on this subject, and we shall by-and-by have the most fitting of all opportunities for its discussion when we come to consider Faust, his great impersonation of philosophic doubt. Here we merely bring together a few of the passages which represent the poet's own sentiments on the point, and show how closely in this, as in other respects, Faust is a reproduction of Goethe. Falk thus describes the issue of a conversation he held with him on the relations of faith and knowledge: "It is then true, and even so extraordinary a genius as Goethe himself was constrained to make the humiliating admission, that all our knowledge on the planet we inhabit is mere botch-work. All our sensible perceptions in all the kingdoms of nature, though conducted with the profoundest acuteness and the utmost deliberation, can as little enable us to form a perfect idea of God and of the universe as the fish in the abysses of the deep (even supposing it endowed with reason) could emancipate itself from the influence of its conceptions formed in that region of fins and scales of which it is an inhabitant, or in its nether element create

to itself a complete and accurate picture of the human form. The problem of life, if placed in knowledge alone, must necessarily induce a sort of despairing, Faust-like discontent."¹ Goethe repeats and stamps with the seal of his own experience the commonplaces of skeptical thinkers. "A man," he says, "knows only when he knows little, with increase of knowledge comes increase of doubt,"² or as he elsewhere puts it: "The more knowledge, the more problems to be solved."³ The universe is full of such problems, a fact which he urges against those who needlessly mystify what is simple and obvious. So also is human history, in which "the last solved problem ever produces a new one to solve."⁴ Nor are these doubts confined to objective knowledge; they form an integral part of his own receptivity. He puts this in a humorous form when he says that he likes the opinions of others to be propounded to him decisively, he has enough of the problematical in himself.⁵ He sets forth a definition of skepticism in terms evidently intended to apply to himself and which would readily be accepted by most skeptical thinkers. "An active skepticism is that which is untiringly employed in overcoming itself, and by means of regulated experience to attain to a sort of conditional credibility."⁶ A still fuller appreciation of skeptical thought is shown by his comparison of the different ages of man with divers kinds of philosophy. The child is a realist, the youth an idealist, but all causes conspire to transform the man into a skeptic. "He does well to doubt whether the means he has chosen for some given end are the best. Before action and in action he has all possible motives to preserve his understanding in a mobile condition, so that he may not subsequently have to regret a false choice."⁷ It

¹ *Characteristics*, vol. i., p. 88.

² *Werke*, vol. xii., p. 692.

³ *Werke*, vol. viii., p. 259.

⁴ *Characteristics*, vol. iii., p. 207.

⁵ *Werke*, vol. xii., p. 667.

⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 729.

⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 737. It is interesting to note the almost *ipsissimis verbis* in which Sir Thomas Brown recounts his own philosophical experience. Speaking of philosophies, he says: "I have run through all sorts, yet find no rest in any: though our first studies and junior endeavours may style us Peripateticks, Stoicks, or Academicks, yet I perceive the wisest heads prove at last almost all Scepticks, and stand like Janus in the field of knowledge". *Works*, ed. Bohn, vol. ii., p. 437.

would be difficult to propound the customary grounds of skepticism more clearly or fully.

3. In connection with these causes of intellectual dissonance we must bear in mind, what has already been noticed, Goethe's conviction of dissonance in nature. At one period of his early life this appears to have assumed a very intense and disquieting form. The earthquake of Lisbon seems to have effected in his case, as in Voltaire's, a complete havoc of his earlier notions as to Divine Providence, and although maturer reflection and a fuller acquaintance with the general laws which govern terrestrial phenomena modified the feeling, yet the conviction of a certain demoniac and disruptive power in nature—equally inscrutable and invincible—remained one of the firmest convictions of his life.¹ How profoundly, albeit in many diversified forms, this persuasion is impressed on his various works, is testified by all his best critics. Thus Varnhagen v. Ense, to take a single example, observes: "Early was Goethe aware of the perplexity and confusion of a world at variance with itself, in the midst of which he was born and grew to manhood. The first works of his genius, 'Werther,' 'Goetz,' 'Faust,' etc., betray the agitation of an inward life impatiently struggling with the forms imposed by the outer world, which can neither conform to them nor be circumscribed by them, and yet utterly wants the new forms in which it might freely expand and be at peace. This struggle, a ceaseless, ever-recurring, fundamental theme, shows itself in all the succeeding works of Goethe in the most varied and loftiest forms," etc.² The most finished form of this dissonance is to be found in "Faust," wherein we have the dualism of the creative and destructive principles of the universe represented respectively by the heavenly hierarchy and by Mephistopheles, as well as occasional intimations of the truth that without this or some antagonism the infinite diversity of natural productions would be inconceivable. Nor is this antagonism limited to Nature and her processes. In all human history, when examined in successive phases, Goethe discerns the same interaction of contrary yet reciprocating influences, the

¹ *Werke*, vol. ix., p. 660. Compare Riemer, *Mittheilungen*, etc., vol. i., p. 111.

² *Characteristics*, vol. iii., p. 286.

same conflict of the perennial and changeable, the persistent and the mobile, the finished form and rudimentary growth. To use his own eloquent and on this theme untranslatable language: "Classicismus und Romanticismus, Innungszwang und Erwerbsfreiheit, Festhalten und Zersplittern des Grundbodens, es ist immer derselbe Conflict, der zuletzt wieder einen neuen erzeugt. Der grösste Verstand des Regierenden wäre daher, diesen Kampf so zu mässigen, dass er ohne Untergang der einen Seite sich ins Gleiche stellte; Diess ist aber den Menschen nicht gegeben, und Gott scheint es auch nicht zu wollen."¹ It is altogether in harmony with the acquiescent feeling of the last clause that he elsewhere remarks: "We cannot escape contradiction in ourselves, we must try to get rid of it by comparison (or comparative methods). When others contradict us, that goes for nothing, that is their concern." Besides its existence in nature and humanity, Goethe discerns a similar dissonance in every department of human thought or activity. It is perceptible in religion, in political science, in physics, and even in art, for among other definitions of the last named he says: "Art is originated by the efforts of the individual to maintain itself against the disruptive force of the whole" (external nature).² Probably it would not be right to conclude from these remarks that Goethe was a dualist—an advocate of twofold truth—but they certainly serve to show that in his mental conformation there was room for a subordinated and disciplined dualism.

4. Nor must we pass over another characteristic of Goethe which assimilates him to skeptical thinkers, *viz.*, his nominalism. Few writers are aware what an important presumption of a thinker's skepticism is afforded by his nominalism, and still fewer seem to have realised the full and unqualified nature of Goethe's admissions on the subject. Yet his nominalism is in part the corollary of his realism. If Goethe was ever anxious, as we have seen, to transmute thoughts and ideas into things, he was not less eager to transform words in the same way. No conviction of his mind was stronger than the misleading, mysti-

¹ *Werke*, vol. xiii., p. 699. With this unlovely and dissonant principle in nature, Goethe thinks poetry ought not to meddle. Compare *Characteristics*, vol. ii., p. 2.

² *Werke*, vol. xii., p. 273.

fyng intervention of words, the idea underlying the well-known utterance of Faust:—

Name ist Schall und Rauch
Umnebelnd Himmelsgluth.

He agreed with Ockam, the great leader of the nominalists, that a verbal definition, however necessary, constitutes no advance of knowledge. "What I rightly know," says Goethe, "I know only to myself; an outspoken word rarely furthers it; for the most part it arouses contradiction, hesitation and inability to move onward."¹ Quite Ockamist too is the sentiment of the lines:—

Ihr musst mich nicht durch Widerspruch verwirren
Sobald man spricht beginnt man schon zu irren.²

Had it been possible, says Falk, Goethe would have liked "to renounce the imperfect medium of language to speak like nature—in symbols". It is moreover evident that these expressions of contempt for human language were not the outcome of a passing fancy or the love of paradox. With his usual profundity Goethe had exhausted the utmost depths of the subject. He is aware, for example, that words can have only a peculiar, individual meaning. They only indicate, and even that imperfectly, the thought of the speaker. They cannot indicate the correspondent thought of the hearer, they cannot be accepted as an infallible presentation of the common idea of which they are nevertheless the sole mode of communication. They cannot claim to be necessarily commensurate with, or adequate to, the object or matter defined. To all these drawbacks of language Goethe is quite alive. "Man, while he speaks, must for the time being be one-sided. There is no communication, no teaching, without separation (*Sonderung*). What really quickens is not man's word but the thought of which the word may possibly be a partial or imperfect expression." Goethe was never happier than when he had the opportunity of transforming words to the objects for which they stood. He never considered that he knew anything of a foreign country or city until he had actually seen it. When, on his Italian tour, he first beheld Venice, 28th September, 1786, he exclaimed—we use his own words—"So ist

¹ *Werke*, vol. viii., p. 403.

² *Ibid.*, vol. i., p. 435.

denn auch, Gott sei dank, Venedig mir kein blosses Wort, kein hohler Name, der mich so oft, mich den Todfeind von Wortschallen geängstigt hat"¹—a remarkable utterance which we may take as his ordinary mode of feeling whenever he could translate geographical words into things. In a similar spirit he says he felt positive pain translating Cellini because he could not obtain the immediate sight of the objects of art described or alluded to, and accounts for this by remarking: "I have all my life long been so much on my guard against nothing as against empty words, and a phrase which did not express some real thought or feeling appeared to me intolerable in others, impossible to myself".² This distrust of words assumed in Goethe different outcomes and consequences. One of them was a cordial dislike of the technical terms and sensuous expressions by means of which the Christian fathers and church councils had endeavoured to define the ineffable.³ Another was his contempt for mere verbal erudition, disputes about the genuineness of ancient writings, etc. "Is it then," he asks on this point, "the author or the writing which we admire or blame? It is always only the author whom we have before us. Why trouble ourselves about names when we read a work of thought?"⁴ Other outcomes of his word-skepticism might have been adduced, but the subject will again recur when we come to the nominalism which is so marked a feature of "Faust".

5. There is one more trait of Goethe's mental affinity with skeptical thought which seems to deserve a passing recognition at our hands. We have already noticed his distaste for extreme skeptical inquiry, and his impatience with the unlimited controversy which was the delight of Lessing's finer mind and in a lesser degree formed one great characteristic of his friend Wieland. But no error would be greater than to conclude from these antipathies that Goethe always measured the value of truth search or science experiment by any decisive, palpable result, whether of fact or theory. A mere utilitarian conception of research was abhorrent to his nature. Not only did he himself delight in his literary and scientific labours for their own sake, but he

¹ *Ersch und Gruber*, ut *supra*, p. 284. Compare Riemer, *Mittheilungen*, vol. i., p. 195.

³ *Werke*, vol. ix., p. 529.

² *Characteristics*, vol. i., p. 241.

⁴ *Ibid.*, vol. viii., p. 407.

was fully convinced that a similarly unselfish sentiment animated all genuine lovers of truth. Thus he says that man's delight is great when he exercises faculties that have been given him, even though nothing further came of it,¹ and more, he allows that our interest in any enterprise is excited only by the effort which it involves; it ceases when the effort has resulted in some decisive issue whether of success or failure.² With this appreciation of unlimited research harmonises the remark already quoted of the inscrutable being necessary for men, inasmuch as without it they would cease to search. Goethe does not appear to have seen how closely these sentiments, which were undoubtedly his own, brought him to the standpoints of Lessing and Wieland. The only discrimination possible between his position and the extreme skepticism of Lessing seems to have been that what the latter set before him as an openly avowed deliberate object, Goethe was content to cherish as a half-conscious sentiment. He was probably misled in this as well as in his general estimate of skepticism by an undue stress on his own appreciation of mental serenity, and by his ignorance of the fact that ataraxia has frequently served both as the motive and natural outcome of suspensive and inquiring skepticism.

The foregoing estimate of Goethe's intellectual character, though somewhat extended, cannot be deemed too much so if it serves to bring before us in all its fulness and importance the profound truth that Faust is Goethe, that all those qualities, tendencies and idiosyncrasies of skepticism which Goethe admits in his remaining works are found in their greatest maturity and fullest development in "Faust". No doubt all critics have acknowledged the partial truth of this proposition. They have admitted that Goethe has infused into "Faust," as he has into "Werther," "Goetz," "Wilhelm Meister," "Tasso," etc., a portion of his own individuality and personal experience. But this admission does not meet the merits of the case. "Faust" seems to us to contain not a portion of Goethe, but the whole. Taking the two parts together there is no phase or aspect of its author's character which "Faust" does not represent, no belief or aspiration which he does not express, scarce a thought or opinion of which he does

¹ *Wilhelm Meister*, Carlyle's translation, vol. ii., p. 183.

² *Ibid.*, vol. i., p. 64.

not convey at least some approximate intimation. No critic to our knowledge has expressed this truth so fully as Riemer.¹ He tells us: "The totality of Goethe as man and as author expresses itself in none of his works so decisively and completely as in 'Faust'; his inner and his outer life, his youthful efforts, his manly powers, his grey-haired wisdom, what he felt and suffered, what he thought and experienced. It is his own self-matter and his own self-form, or :—

Der Gehalt in seinem Busen
Und die Form in seinem Geist."

The significance of this truth in its bearing both on Goethe and Faust can hardly be overstated; the author and his work, the reality and the fiction, either may be regarded as the text to which the other is the best possible commentary. It is needless to point out the bearing of this truth on the question of the skepticism whether of Faust or of Goethe. If Faust be, as we shall find reason to think him, a genuine illustration of inquiring skepticism, that character can hardly be denied to Goethe. On the other hand Goethe's intellectual conformation, his critical method of research, his doubts and hesitations, his love of freedom, his distrust of words and forms, in a word, all those qualities we have already enumerated, are found depicted in a concentrated form and indelible colours in his masterpiece of "Faust". This is conclusively shown by a sketch of the drama, to which we now turn our attention.

The legend of "Faust" is in its origin the child of the Renaissance and Reformation, or rather of the disruptive forces and tendencies which produced those great events. Like *Prometheus* and Job it marks that stage in the growth of a particular belief when it becomes self-conscious, inquiring, and to a certain extent disintegrating. It represents the unrest of a period of deep commotion and struggle, both intellectual and spiritual. It signifies the gradual sundering of older beliefs and prescriptions, the growing dissonance between faith and reason, the inevitable strife between ecclesiasticism and nature-teaching, the insurrection of man, not so much against God as against the Moloch conception of him which had obtained in the Church. Nor less

¹ *Mittheilungen*, vol. i., p. 231.

did it typify and give scope to the passionate yearning, by whatever means, for fuller knowledge, the struggle of the finite to grasp the infinite, which must always characterise a period of profound spiritual feeling. Besides which it ministered and imparted a weird form to the *Weltschmerz*, which is the usual reaction of great intellectual or spiritual commotion. Last of all, it gave expression to the inordinate craving of men for the supernatural and miraculous which is an inevitable result of sacerdotalism and ignorance. Harmonising with these various causes was the great diversity of forms which the original story assumed. Few persons unacquainted with Faust literature have any idea of the multifarious issue of drama, ballad, story, parable, etc., to which the old legend gave birth during the fourteenth and two following centuries. Indeed the fecundity of the Faust legend has been hardly less than that of the Prometheus myth. Probably the popular interest of the former has been even greater than that of the latter. The daring magician—himself a kind of Titan—who, in his eagerness to obtain omniscience, was willing to barter his soul to the devil, exercised a fascination at once powerful and terrible on the popular imagination.¹ Nor was this element of terror less because the generally received result of the compact—the final damnation of the too eager inquirer—betrays an ecclesiastical and obscurantist animus, just as the extreme sufferings of Prometheus probably had a deterrent tendency to the old-fashioned religious Hellene. This was no doubt the salutary outcome of the legend which rendered it acceptable to the mediæval Church. By zealous Romanists it was regarded as a modern version of the history of the Fall. At a period when men's allegiance to Rome began to be sensibly shaken, when the attractions of classical literature, nature studies and other kinds of secular learning came into rivalry with ecclesiastical dogma, the story of Faust in its common form was an opportune warning against knowledge greed, a protest against listening to the persuasions of the tempter, or looking at a tree pleasant to the eyes, good for food, and a tree to be desired to make one wise. Goethe accepted the mediæval legend, especially in the form it had received from Marlowe as the background of a

¹ Compare *Ersch und Gruber*, Art. "Faust-Sage," sect. i., vol. xlii., p. 94.

twofold representation. First, as we have noticed, of his own career in the pursuit of truth and happiness with its attendant failure and disappointment, its manifold experiences, interests and passions. Secondly, of the pursuits and destinies of the race, for it should never be forgotten Faust in Goethe's drama, especially in its latter part, symbolises humanity. He is the universal man, sharing all the desires, partaking of all the excellencies and defects of the race. In thus expanding his hero's individuality Goethe, besides obeying his own cosmic or universalist fancy, did no more than follow Faustian tradition. One main idea of the old legend was to represent a being who might exhaust all the pleasures and pains, the feelings and appetites, the powers and attainments of collective humanity. No doubt the idea is no more than an abstraction. Faust thus conceived is like the typical plant-form which Goethe showed to Schiller, and the latter poet's comment on the one might be extended to the other. At any rate there is only one individual in all history who full embodies and expresses the Faustian ideal, and that, as we have seen, is Goethe himself.

Of the three introductory pieces, the dedication consists of the poet's retrospect of the momentous sway Faustian thoughts and yearnings have exercised over his own life. Addressing his mature conceptions, he reminds them of their earlier form. Memory re-awakens the pangs and feelings of his former Faustian studies.

Der Schmerz wird neu, es wiederholt die Klag'
Des Lebens labyrinthisch Irren lang.

The last clause, "Life's labyrinthine mazy course," we may take as a premonitory map, on a reduced scale, of Faust's devious wanderings; the pre-determined bearings of his erratic course.

The Prologue in the Theatre is only remarkable for our purpose by containing what seems to be a reminiscence of the simpler *motif* of the drama before it was complicated and perverted by the addition of the Second Part.

So schreitet in dem engen Bretterhaus
Der ganze Kreis der Schöpfung aus,
Und wandelt mit bedächt'ger Schnelle
Vom Himmel durch die Welt zur Hölle.

Whence it would appear that in its earlier form Goethe con-

templated such a catastrophe as Marlowe has employed for the *dénouement* of his drama. There cannot be a doubt that in respect of unity, compactness and simplicity the plot would have been much better in this form.

But the true commencement of our actual "Faust" is to be found in the Prologue in Heaven. This is a poetical adaptation and extension of the supernatural machinery and incidents of the Book of Job. The influence of the old Hebrew drama on the genesis of the Faust legend has often been pointed out, and is too obvious to need special remark. To the powerful diabolism of the dark ages it furnished the two foundation stones on which every story of Faust has been built. 1. The conception of a personal Satan with his employment of traversing the earth for destructive, misanthropical purposes. 2. The notion of a compact or bet between him and the Almighty concerning the defectibility of a certain human personage. But independently of the place of Job in the old Faustian legends, the book possessed an especial interest for Goethe. As every student of his works is aware, he greatly admired the Titanism—the invincible independence—of the Hebrew patriarch, and was very fond of studying its vivid dramatic presentation in the book which bears his name. The Prologue in Heaven is an elaboration of its diabolic elements. It is introduced by the well-known song of the archangels glorifying the wisdom displayed in the creation. This is at once followed by the appearance of Mephistopheles, the common Faustian name of the evil one, who, in opposition to the creative vivifying forces of the universe, represents the spirit of denial, or of merely negative destructive skepticism. In contradiction to the archangelic pæan, he rails at creation, especially that of earth, with its chief denizen, man. He ridicules more particularly man's boasted possession of heaven's light—the Promethean torch, the gift of reason. This supposed gift, says Mephistopheles, man has so misused that he is more bestial than the beasts. God wishes to make Faust an exception to the ordinary human herd, and calls him his own servant. Whereupon Mephistopheles ridicules his service as interested, and himself as utterly dissatisfied. Few passages of the drama are more important for the full comprehension of Faust's character.

Fürwahr ! er dient euch auf besondere Weise
 Nicht irdisch ist des Thoren Frank noch Speise,
 Ihn treibt die Gährung in die Ferne
 Er ist sich seiner Tollheit halb bewusst :
 Vom Himmel fordert er die schönsten Sterne
 Und von der Erde jede höchste Lust
 Und alle Näh und alle Ferne
 Befriedigt nicht die tiefbewegte Brust.

Goethe has here depicted not so much the genuine truth-seeker, as the restless idealist who loses himself in the pursuit of fruition of every kind, his chief characteristic being that he is for ever impelled by desires he cannot satisfy, and agitated by passions he cannot allay. Whatever may be said for the idea from the standpoint of dramatic interest, or from that which regards Faust as the type of humanity, it cannot be questioned that the union in a single character of the searcher after all truth, and seeker after all happiness, is so rare that it might almost be regarded as unique among men. Certainly the history of the noblest truth-seekers fully proves that the acquisition of happiness was not regarded by them as more than a subordinate and incidental result of their quest. But here, as elsewhere, Goethe drew from his own peculiar experience more than from history. The general principle of the twofold quest is "die Gährung in die Ferne"—precisely what Shelley termed "the desire for something afar from the sphere of our sorrow". Its cause, as suggested by Mephistopheles, is the perverted reason, the false, seductive glare of the "Himmelslicht" which the Deity has conferred on man. On the other hand, God points out that striving or effort is necessarily attended with error, and expresses his confidence that Faust, though now mistaken, will finally emerge into the clear light of truth. Hence, like the Hebrew Jahve in the case of Job, he is prepared to commit his servant to the snares of the Evil One, and defies him to pervert his spirit from its own pure source. We may notice in passing Goethe's firm, almost fatalistic, belief in the due inherent development of every genuine man, or "Nature," as he termed him. Mephistopheles readily accepts the challenge, and has no doubt of the result. He says of Faust :—

Staub soll er fressen, und mit Lust
 Wie meine Muhme, die berühmte Schlange.

The compact is thus concluded, and the prologue ends with a justification of the questionable transaction by which God delivers Faust into the power of Mephistopheles.

Des Menschen Thätigkeit kann allzuleicht erschaffen,
 Er liebt sich bald die unbedingte Ruh' ;
 Drum geb'ich gern ihm den Gesellen zu,
 Der reizt und wirkt, und muss, als Teufel, schaffen.

In other words, the spirit of denial or negation is needful for man to goad him into activity. Goethe does not seem to have discriminated clearly the skepticism of denial from that of mere doubt and inquiry, or he would have acknowledged that it is the latter which is most efficacious for this purpose. One great quality of this spirit is its unlimited freedom. The negation is infinite or endlessly destructive. As a contrast to this absolute denial, the heavenly choir, the genuine sons of God, find their allotted task in enjoying the living manifold beauty of "*Das Werden*"—the ever-working and growing energy of creation in its fullest aspect. Their activities are thus not unlimited, but are bound by the noble confines of love, and are directed, not in any wild discordant manner, but in order to spiritualise and fix in ideal expression the perpetual truth underlying transitory phenomena.

This explanatory introduction ended, the drama itself opens with Faust's confession of unfaith. In his study at midnight, with the moonbeams streaming through the narrow Gothic window, Faust propounds the question of his actual truth attainments. For many a year he has pursued the wearying round of all human sciences. He has fully explored philosophy, jurisprudence, medicine, and, unluckily for himself, theology. What then, he asks, is the net result of all his efforts? In reply, he is forced to own more in the plaintive spirit of Cornelius Agrippa than in the serenely acquiescent mood of Sokrates:—

Da steh ich nur, ich armer Thor
 Und bin so klug als wie zuvor.

Bitterly does he mock at his fame, his titles of "Master" and "Doctor," his power to lead his pupils by the nose whithersoever he lists. He cannot help contrasting his loud-voiced reputation with his secret conviction that all knowledge is impossible. It is this consciousness of human limitation that gives him intel-

lectual heart-burning. No doubt he is more advanced in knowledge than the common herd of doctors, masters, authors, and parsons. He has achieved that height of negation in which neither scruple nor doubt has power to plague him. He fears neither hell nor devil. But he is not happier in consequence of his exemption from these deterrents. On the contrary, all joy is torn from his life. The negation which has destroyed his fear of hell and devil has carried its desolating influences into other articles of his former creed. No longer can he conceive himself to know anything aright. He cannot even suppose himself capable of teaching what will benefit and convert mankind. Withal he possesses neither property nor gold, nor worldly distinction. No dog would be satisfied with such a life. As a last resource, he has resolved to appeal to magic in the desperate hope of attaining that knowledge he cannot otherwise acquire. Thus he may wrest from Nature her profoundest secrets, and no longer feign to teach what he does not know. Especially does he wish to learn what that hidden force is which in its most inward recesses joins together the universe. He aspires to behold every will-power and germ of life, and in the possession of this complete and direct knowledge to cease from his petty traffic with empty words.

It may be well to pause a moment at this soliloquy. We have here the modern termination of that truth-search of which the ancient starting-point is represented by the *Prometheus*—the final retrospect of what is in Aeschylus a distant but glowing prospect. For it must never be forgotten the standpoint here represented is not exclusively that of a mediæval Faust. It is Faust *plus* Goethe, the experience and aspirations of the latter are grafted on the occult love of the former. Thus human wisdom has reached the end of its tether. The whole circle of rightfully available knowledge has been traversed with, as it would seem, but pitiful results. The only recourse left is the appeal from the natural to the supernatural—from human power to diabolical agency—which constitutes the plot of Goethe's drama. In the author's own conception this appeal might be stated as one from experience to imagination, from actuality to possibility, or from fact to aspiration, due allowance being made for the weird and theoretically illegitimate character of the

transition. How far any such irregular extension of human power is desirable, how far its employment is likely to benefit mankind—for this is the aim of the knowledge search both of Faust and Prometheus—on these points the drama leaves us where it finds us—in doubt.

Returning to Faust, we find that his mood changes somewhat abruptly from skepticism to a kind of mysticism. Addressing the moon, he expresses the wish that she were contemplating for the last time that midnight restlessness on which she has so often shone. Like Hamlet he would fain free himself from the trammels of bodily existence. He wishes his disembodied spirit were wandering with other spirits on mountain heights and in mountain caves, where, freed from all anxiety of knowledge, it might bathe in the moon's dew. So far is he carried away by this vision of freedom that for a moment he loses himself. Soon, however, a glance round his narrow study serves to recall him to himself. "Woe is me," he exclaims; "am I still penn'd up in this dungeon? Accursed, musty, inwall'd hole, where even the precious light of heaven breaks dimly through painted panes." With probably a double meaning he proceeds to lament that his light is obstructed by heaps of worm-eaten, dust-covered books. All his surroundings partake of the same darkening, limiting tendency—the wall-paper begrimed with smoke—the glass cases and boxes filled with ancient lumber—that enclose him, this is Faust's world, "and a fine world it is," is his bitter sarcasm.

After another pause, he asks himself, Is it a wonder that his heart beats so, and that an inexplicable pain thwarts every fresh impulse of vitality? Instead of being encompassed by the living Nature that God created for man, Faust is surrounded by symbols of death, by skeletons of beasts and dead men's bones, by smoke and corruption. Then bethinking him of one mode of deliverance from the environment of darkness and limitation, he addresses himself: "Up! away into the boundless land, and this mysterious look of Nostradamus is it not guide sufficient for thee?" In other words, Faust resolves to appeal to magic. All ordinary sources of knowledge have failed. Nature has been examined and found wanting. Reason has been questioned, but has returned no reliable reply. Human history has been appealed to, but with small result. Ordinary science has

been consulted, but has yielded no trustworthy response. In his despair he turns to occult science. He tells us what he expects from his new oracle. "Then wilt thou know the course of the stars, and with Nature for thy teacher the soul's essence will rise to greet thee as one spirit speaks to another." In other words, he hopes to learn the inmost secrets of Nature—the kind and degree of knowledge which all such inquirers as Faust have summed up in the term "Absolute".

Thus far Faust must be held to represent the mediæval inquirer, sharing the superstitions of his time, and employing its methods in truth-search. Neither Goethe nor his commentators seem to have thought the fact worth mention that the Fausts of Greece and other nations of hoar antiquity had already tried the invocations of Nostradamus, or at least magic charms of a similar kind, and that they had long since admitted the impossibility of attaining satisfactory science by such supernatural methods. This fact may serve to indicate incidentally how much inferior in respect of culture was the Christianity of the middle ages to Greek philosophy, for instance, even in its supposed decay. At any rate, Faust's skepticism ceases for the time at the door of the conjurer's temple of mystery. He opens the book of Nostradamus and sees the sign of the Makrokosmos, *i.e.*, the Universe. The sight ravishes him. A fresh glow of life-pleasure thrills through his frame. Is it a god, he asks, who devised this sign and caused that marvellous excitation of feeling he has experienced by looking at it? The powers of Nature within and without him seem to requicken with new life. He now experiences the truth of the teaching of the wise man: "The world of spirits is not closed, thy sense is shut, thy heart is dead. Up! scholar, bathe unweariedly thy earthly breast in the red beams of Aurora." Again he contemplates the sign, and is now reminded of the infinite manifoldness of the universe, and the complicated interaction of all its countless forces. The powers of heaven and earth seem animated by reciprocal influences. They depend on each other's activity like two golden buckets perpetually ascending and descending. Yet through all these forces which circulate between heaven and earth a harmony of unity is perceptible to the awakened ear. Continuing his gaze on the sign, Faust's skeptical mood begins gradually to re-assert itself. After all the

show though wondrous is only a show. How can he with his finite powers grasp infinite nature? Where can he find her breasts, where her sources of all life on which both heaven and earth depend? For these his thirsty soul pines with ardent longing. They flow and satisfy other existences, while he is left languishing in vain.

Like many another thinker whose aspiration exceeds the utmost limits of his capacities, Faust is dispirited at this thought. He turns over impatiently the leaves of his Nostradamus, and presently comes to the sign of the Mikrokosm or Earth. The spirit of earth seems nearer to him than those of the universe. He feels a quickening of his powers. He glows as with new wine. His rising courage prompts him to cast himself into the world, to bear earth's sorrows and earth's joys, to wrestle with storms and stand unshaken in the crash of the world's shipwreck—a kind of fever-fit of Titanism. He is also conscious of being surrounded by what seem to him signs of the earth-spirit's presence. This he determines to invoke at the cost, if necessary, of his life. Seizing the book, he pronounces mysteriously the sign of the spirit. In answer to his invocation it appears in a red flame, and demands to know what Faust requires of it. The conjurer himself is startled by the strange form he has invoked, and the earth-spirit upbraids him for his cowardice. Resenting this imputation, Faust proclaims himself the equal of the spirit. The latter, to prove its superiority, declares its functions:—

In the tides of life, in action's storm,
I float up and down,
Flitting hither and thither,
I am birth and the grave,
An eternal sea,
A changeful weaving,
A glowing life.

Thus I work at the swift-rushing loom of Time,
And weave the living mantle of God.

Faust rejoins that he feels himself near to the active spirit that thus sweeps round the wide world, but the spirit answers that he resembles the spirit he comprehends, not itself, which he has failed to comprehend. Whereupon it vanishes, leaving Faust to propound the question if he who is the image of the deity is not the equal of the earth-spirit.

At this point Faust's incantations are disturbed. Wagner, his familiar friend—an embodiment of dogmatism and pedantry—is heard knocking at the door. The magician is angry that his fulness of visions should be interrupted by a “sapless groveller,” but the other, after apologising for his intrusion on the pretext that he thought Faust had been declaiming a Greek tragedy, opportunely begs for instruction on the subject of rhetoric. Faust complies with his request by suggesting a few general maxims as to the need of earnestness, and the non-importance of mere words, but the dialogue thus begun soon turns to the general subject of knowledge. Wagner complains that art is long while life is short—that his own critical studies often make his head and heart weary; that the requisite means for thoroughly exploring the sciences are difficult to obtain; and, after all, before a man gets half way towards his goal, the poor devil must die. In reply, Faust—representing Goethe's contempt for codex-hunting—asks whether parchment is the holy well from which a single draught assuages thirst for ever. He tells his companion he has not attained a source of vitality till he has drawn from the founts of his own mind. Wagner defends his literary antiquarianism. He says it is a great pleasure to transport oneself into the spirit of the times, to see how a wise man has thought before us, and what a glorious height we are able to reach at last. But his enthusiasm is ridiculed by Faust, who has more profoundly estimated the reach of human knowledge. “Oh yes,” he exclaims, “up to the very stars.” “Past time,” says the skeptic, “is a book with seven seals. What is called the spirit of the times is in truth the spirit of its leading minds, in which the time is mirrored. At any rate this knowledge of the past is often a miserable affair. A single glance is enough to make one run from it. It is a dirt tub, a lumber room, or at its best a puppet-show play with rare pragmatistical saws such as well become the mouths of the puppets.” His friend apparently has nothing to object to this skeptical estimate of historical lore, he therefore seeks certitude in another subject. “But the world-man's heart and mind—every one would fain acquire some knowledge of that.” But here again he is met by Faust's sarcasm. “Yes, what is called knowing. Who dares give the child its true name? The few who have ever known anything about it, and who

foolishly enough did not keep a guard over their full hearts, but revealed what they had felt and seen to the multitude, have in all times been crucified and burnt." Oft-quoted words, which sum up with equal force and conciseness many fatal episodes in the history of human enlightenment! At this point the dialogue breaks off at Faust's request, and Wagner departs, promising to seek another interview on the morrow (Easter Day). He partly apologises for his ardour in intellectual pursuits with the words:—

Heart and soul have I given myself to study,
Much I know, it is true, but I would fain know all,

—wherein we perceive that even the pedant and dogmatist may share, though from a different standpoint, the aspiration of the true skeptic for infinite knowledge. Faust comments sardonically on this extreme knowledge-greed: "Hope still cleaves to the brain which clings persistently to trash, gropes with greedy hands for treasures, and exults at finding earth-worms". With this reflection he relapses into the mystic frame of mind which Wagner has disturbed. Recurring to the earth-spirit's denial of his equality with itself, he soliloquises: "I, God's own image, who already thought myself near to the mirror of eternal truth, who revelled in the lustre and clearness of heaven with the earthly part of me stripped off; I, more than cherub, whose emancipated spirit in its imaginative soarings had already aspired to glide through Nature's veins, and in creative power to enjoy the life of a God—How must I atone for it? One thunder-word has swept me quite away." He endeavours by reflection to reinstate himself in the condition of equality with the earth-spirit from which the "thunder-word" has hurled him. Had he not been, he reasons, the equal of the earth-spirit he would not have had the power to invoke him. He complains that the spirit has cruelly thrust him back on the incertitude of mere humanity. He becomes skeptical of the value of his recently-boasted traffic with spirits. "Who," he asks, "will teach me? What shall I avoid? Must I obey that impulse? Ah! our very acts as well as our sufferings narrow the course of our lives"—a thought which, as we shall see, might be regarded as the moral of Hamlet.

Pursuing the same vein of skeptical despair, his doubt of the advantages of spirit communication still increases. The most

glorious idea man's thought is able to conceive is clogged by matter which is ever growing more and more foreign to it. Besides, when we have gained the good of this world, what is better is still called falsehood and vanity. Our noblest feelings which gave us life grow torpid in the din of earthly strife. "Nor is the lot of the aspiring imagination better, for whereas in times gone by it has endeavoured on daring wing and full of hope to attain infinity, she is now satisfied with little space when she has found one venture after another wrecked in the whirlpool of time. Care soon builds her nest in the depths of the heart, hatches vague terrors there, rocks herself restlessly, and frightens away joy and peace. Continually does she disguise herself with new masks; she may appear as house and land, as wife and child, as fire, water, dagger, and poison. You tremble before all that never assail you, and what you never lose, for that must you always be grieving."

Here we find Faust gradually approaching the Werther feeling of pessimism, which presently attains its climax in an attempt at suicide. Reverting to his former boast of being like God, he now renounces the vain thought. "Too deeply I feel it. I am not equal with the gods. I am rather like the worm which drags itself through the dust, and which, while it crawls in and feeds upon dust, is crushed and buried beneath the wand'rer's tread. Is it not dust," he continues, surveying the book-lined walls of his study, "with which this high wall with its hundred shelves confines me round—the frippery which with its thousand-fold trifling cramps me up in this moth-world? Must I," he asks impatiently, "find here what I lack? Must I read perhaps in a thousand books that men have made themselves wretched in all ages, that here and there only has there been a happy individual?" His reflections are here arrested by the grinning expression of a skull which meets his restless glance around the study, and which he thus apostrophises: "Thou hollow skull, what means that grin at me but that thy brain like mine was once bewildered, sought the bright day, and with an ardent longing after truth went miserably astray in the twilight?" In his gloomy humour even the scientific instruments piled round him seem to join in the mockery of the skull. The vanity of human science is shared by its tools—wheel and cog, cylinder

and collar. "I stood at the gate (of knowledge). Ye were to be the keys. True, your beards are shaggy, but ye raise not the bolts. Full of darkness in broad day, Nature does not allow herself to be robbed of her veil, and what she does not choose to reveal to thy mind, thou wilt not force from her by levers and screws. Antiquated apparatus which I have never used, you are here only because my father employed you. Thou, old lamp-pulley,¹ hast become befouled with smoke since the dim lamp first smouldered on this desk. Far better had it been for me to have squandered the little I have than to be sweating here under the burden of that little. To possess the inheritance of thy sires make it thine own. That which man does not use is an oppressive burden. What the moment brings forth, that only can it turn to profit."

Pursuing still further in his skeptical disquietude the inventory of his study, Faust's eye is at last attracted by a small flask, the sight of which produces in him a strange revulsion of feeling. He asks why all things that just now were dark appear so delightfully bright, as when moonlight suddenly gleams round one benighted in the woods. The phial is an old friend newly found. As such Faust addresses it: "I greet thee, thou matchless phial, which I now take down with pious care. In thee I honour the wit and art of man, thou essence of noble slumber juices, thou extract of all kind, death-dealing powers. Prove on thy master thy art. As I look on thee my pain subsides, I grasp thee and the struggle abates. The spirit's flood-tide ebbs by degrees. I am beckoned forth into the wide sea, the glassy wave gleams at my feet. Another day invites to other shores."

In this ecstatic contemplation of the freedom death can bestow, Faust seems to himself another Elijah. "A chariot of fire waves downwards to me on light pinions. I feel prepared to penetrate ethereal realms by a new path towards new spheres of pure activity. Ah, what a life sublime is this! What godlike ecstasy! And thou, who erst wert but a worm, dost thou merit it? Aye, only turn thy back with firm resolve on the bright sun of earth. Dare to burst the portals past which every one tries to sneak.

¹ This reading of the oft misinterpreted words—

"Du alte Rolle, du wirst angeraucht"—

is that given by Professor Selss in his useful and learned edition, p. 265.

Now is the time to prove by deeds that man's dignity yields not to God's greatness—to refuse to tremble before that dark cavern in which phantasy dooms itself to its own torments—to strive onwards to that pass round whose narrow mouth all hell is flaming—to resolve calmly upon the step, even at the risk of dropping into nothingness.”

Faust next addresses himself to a goblet of pure crystal—an heir-loom of his ancestors, and dwelling upon the curious reminiscences of former drinking bouts, and the usages attending them which it suggests, proceeds to pour into it the fatal contents of the phial. Then—his suicidal resolve fully taken—he lifts the draught to his mouth with the words: “Here is a juice which soon intoxicates. It fills your cavity with its brown flood. Let this last draught which I prepare and which I choose, be quaffed with my whole soul as a solemn festal greeting to the morn”—when suddenly his resolve is arrested and his feelings turned into quite another channel by the sound of the bells ushering in the morn of Easter Day, while he hears voices singing the Easter anthem:—

Christ ist erstanden
Freude dem Sterblichen
Den die verderblichen
Schleichenden, erblichen
Mängel umwanden.

The scene and its striking termination are well known. We have adduced it at length because it reveals the extreme depth of Faust's skepticism, and indicates also the amount and kind of knowledge which Goethe possessed of its methods. With the exception of his transactions with the spirit world, there is little in Faust's meditations on the vanity of truth search, the thwarting of noble aims by ignoble conditions, etc., which is not common to pessimists. Nor can it be said that Goethe's representation of an ideal skeptic as a compound of Werther and Faust—the extreme pessimist and the truth searcher—is borne out by the history of pre-eminent skeptics. All Faust's reflections, for example, on the futility of human knowledge, may be found in the works of Greek thinkers, but no distinction can be greater than that which exists between the serenity of the ancient skeptics and the maudlin sentimentality of modern Fausts.

Goethe was probably not aware that skeptical suspense, combined with continuous search, was regarded by the Greeks as a preliminary to ataraxia, not as a preparation for any such "bowl and dagger business" as we have in *Faust*. Indeed, his ignorance on the point is incidentally disclosed by his expression in "*Werther*," that the followers of Pyrrhon were miserable. Nothing could be further from the truth. As a philosophical sect they were remarkable for their mental tranquillity, for their high standard of morals, and for their longevity. No doubt Goethe might have had in view only the portraiture of mediæval skeptics regarded from the standpoint of ecclesiasticism, but there is nothing to show that he was conscious of any disparity between his creation of *Faust* and the more normal type of skeptic such as it occurs, for example, in Greek thought. The sole apology which can be made for *Faust's* suicidal propensities is his mystic Neo-Platonic belief that death is a freedom from bondage.

Leaving, however, Goethe's imperfect conception of skepticism, to which we shall again have to recur, we may observe that nothing can be truer to nature than the effect of the Easter bell-ringing and anthem on the despairing mood of *Faust*. Not that he himself believes "the greatest miracle of the New Testament," for he says:—

The news I gladly hear—I only want belief,
For wonder is the darling child of faith,

but that old associations connected with the day—the familiar strains of Easter hymns—re-awaken the feelings of childhood, together with the unquestioning and awe-struck faith he then possessed, but which has long disappeared under the corroding influence of further knowledge and more doubt. Overpowered by these recollections and by the contrast they suggest to his recent despair, *Faust* bursts into tears, and for the present relinquishes all attempt to sunder violently the ties that bind him to earth, and which have unexpectedly proved stronger than he was aware.

The next scene introduces us to the same Easter morn outside *Faust's* study. In contradistinction to the gloomy student's cell we have troops of citizens of all classes hurrying out at the town gates, intent on enjoying their Easter festivities, and the bright sunshine of the spring morning. Instead of solitude we

here find full, free, bustling existence. Instead of despair we have unrestrained enjoyment of life. Instead of recondite thought, researches into occult or profound wisdom, we have here animal spirits in all their natural exuberance. In a word, we pass from the living sepulchre in which Faust has for the time buried his noblest hopes and aspirations into the resurrection morn, wherein, in common with new vivified life everywhere, he himself also experiences the requickening power of his own early spring-time of youth. It is in harmony with Goethe's own predilections, as well as with the larger aspects of human existence, which form the greatest possible contrast to the narrowness of Faust's student life, that the pleasure-seekers who hurry out at the city gates seem concerned, not with the religious, but with the social, pleasurable and natural aspect of Easter. To them Easter-tide is chiefly a secular holiday—a time for enjoyment, for rural pastimes, for contemplation of the new fresh life of spring. Among these holiday-makers presently come forth Faust and Wagner, intending to take a walk into the country. The former takes note of the phenomena of spring-time, the reluctant departure of winter. The sun, he remarks, will not endure what is colourless (*"die Sonne duldet nichts Weisses"*). Creative energies and efforts are everywhere stirring. All things are renewing their lives with fresh colours, only that as flowers are yet wanting to the atmosphere, the sun takes gaily dressed holiday-makers instead. But especially does Faust recognise the symbolical teaching of Easter in the delight of the crowds in the fair spring weather and the sunshine. "They celebrate the rising of the Lord, for they themselves have risen. From the sordid rooms of mean houses, from the bonds of factories and trades, from the confinement of gables and roofs, from the stifling narrowness of streets, from the venerable gloom of churches are they raised up to the open light of day." Inspired by the gaiety and freedom of the scene, Faust once more feels himself to be a man. Amidst the gay crowd keeping their spring festival he thinks he may claim the sympathetic consciousness of common humanity.

Wagner, on the other hand, whose studies have not had the expansive tendency which the larger speculations of Faust have produced on his own mental culture, is repelled by the bustle, the noise, the boisterous mirth, the occasionally vulgar behaviour of

the Easter crowd. He enjoys walking with Faust, but declares himself in pedantic fashion an enemy to all kinds of coarseness. The crowd seems to him as if animated by an evil spirit, and yet they call it "pleasure and music".

Pursuing their walk, Faust is presently accosted by some of the holiday-makers, who thankfully recognise his condescension in coming among them. They recount the skill and courage he evinced some years before in curing them of a pestilential fever. He modestly disclaims any merit for his own share in the matter, describes in a tone of contempt his father's alchymical method, and attributes the few cures their joint efforts seemed to effect to accident, since in reality their magical potions killed more than the pestilence. He himself has administered the poison to thousands. They pined away—no one asked why. Yet such is the irony of existence—or what seems so to Faust's skeptical mood—he now must endure to hear the bold murderer praised. Wagner refuses to credit these self-accusations. Men can only practise what they know, and a few victims to science need not disturb Faust's mind. He honoured his father in youth by receiving his teaching; inasmuch as he has since increased his knowledge, he will leave a still greater hoard as a legacy to his son. Faust, however, is not deceived by Wagner's theory of the increase of knowledge in successive generations. He only aspires to deliverance from error. "Happy is the man," he exclaims, "who can still hope to emerge from this sea of error. What man does not know he is anxious to learn, and what he knows he cannot make use of." But in the quiet happiness of the evening Faust will not pursue the mournful theme. His eyes are directed to the setting sun. He wishes he were able to accompany the orb of day in its ceaseless progress.

Ihr nach und immer nach zu streben.

In imagination he seems to pursue it as it gradually recedes beyond his vision. Fain would he rush forward to drink its everlasting light—the day before him, behind him the night, above him the heavens, and beneath him the waves. But alas! man's spiritual desires, with all their forward and upward impulses, have no material pinions to aid them.

Wagner listens docilely to what he evidently regards as a

philosophic rhapsody. He himself has had, he admits, strange fancies, but they have never taken this form. One soon gets tired, he thinks, of looking at woods and fields, and for his part he envies not the wings of a bird. His sole idea of intellectual progress is to pass from one book or page to another, and his highest rapture—which appears to him celestial—is to unroll some precious MS. or parchment. In this confession Faust recognises the distinction between Wagner and himself. “Of one impulse only thou art conscious, never seek to know the other. Two souls, alas, dwell in my breast, and one will sunder itself from the other. One cleaves with vehement ardour and clinging organs to the world. The other with all its might lifts itself from the mist to the realms of an exalted ancestry.” Excited by his contemplation of the spirit world towards which one of his twin souls is ever aspiring, Faust invokes the spirits of the air which dominate in the regions between earth and heaven. He wishes they would take him away into a new and more varied existence, or that he were possessed of a magic cloak which had the power of transporting him to distant lands. He would not barter it for a royal mantle. Wagner, who appears to share to some extent his friend’s belief in occult lore, is alarmed at this invocation of the spirits of the air. He suggests as the twilight is increasing that they had better return homewards. This advice, however, Faust scarcely seems to hear. His attention is now taken up by a strange black dog, which courses round them in ever-narrowing circles. Presently he calls Wagner’s attention to the beast, but though the pedant has noticed it for some time he sees nothing remarkable about it. To him it is only a dog like any other. Faust’s keener vision, however, discerns supernatural qualities in the beast, its tracks seem to give forth flames of fire. This poodle accompanies the friends home, and is admitted into his study by Faust.

Here again Faust is alone and according to his wont beguiles his solitude with soliloquising. The soothing influences of the day—his pleasant walk among fields and meadows—still assert their power. For the time his better soul is awake, while his wayward impulses are put to rest. He is conscious only of goodwill to man, whence he infers that the love of God is stirring within him. His soliloquy is here disturbed by the restlessness

of the poodle. The beast rushes with a continuous growl to and fro in the study, while Faust endeavours vainly to coax it into quietness by placing his best cushion at its service. He next lights his study lamp. The well-known homely gleam seems to harmonise with his recently acquired mental repose. The lamp is a symbol of mental clearness in the heart which knows itself. Reason begins to speak and hope to bloom once more. Instead of courting despair and death, he longs for the streams and fountains of life. Again his peaceful meditations are disturbed by the poodle's growl. The harsh noise seems to exercise a peculiarly disquieting effect on Faust. He begins to experience a return of his cynical and misanthropic mood. Every one knows, he bitterly remarks, that men despise what they cannot understand—that they snarl at the good and beautiful for which they have often no sympathy. Does the poodle imitate them by growling at the same objects?

The question is significant, as we learn by the words immediately following. Faust's peaceful mood is disappearing notwithstanding his best wishes to retain it. No longer does he feel content welling from his bosom. His perception of the change re-awakens his disquietude and dissatisfaction. Why must the stream so soon disappear and again leave him to the thirst of which he has had so bitter experience? And yet this felt want may possibly have its uses, at least we may learn from it to cherish what is above earth. We hence long for revelation, which nowhere more worthily and beautifully glows than in the New Testament. Following the prompting of his thoughts Faust is impelled to translate the sacred text into his own beloved German tongue. Accordingly he opens his Greek Testament, and, as it happens, at the first chapter of St. John's Gospel, whereupon he thus meditates:—

'Tis writ: "In the beginning was the word,"
 But here I halt, and who will help me further?
 So high I can *the word* by no means value,
 I must translate it otherwise.
 If by the spirit I am well enlightened,
 It stands: "In the beginning was the thought"
 —Yet well consider this first line,
 That so thy pen may not with haste be marr'd.

Is it *the thought* which all things works and forms ?
It should stand : " In the beginning was the power ".
Yet even while I write this down
There's something warns me I should not stop there ;
The spirit helps me,—I see as once his lead,
And write assured : " In the beginning was the deed ".

In its twofold relation to Faust and Goethe the full significance of this passage is generally overlooked. The careful analysis of the text, the shifting from one interpretation to another, the concentration of the supersensuous aspects of creation to the actual fact which is all that is given us in experience, are significant of Faust's general moods and methods. They indicate his tendency to analysis, his restless striving (*Streben*), and in part his theological skepticism. Similarly the contempt for words and verbal abstractions, the insistence on the positive visible *deed* as the principle of creation, the realistic basis of the universe, are favourite modes of thought with Goethe. Recent commentators have shown that the selection of the first chapter of St. John as the subject of Faust's Hermeneutics was not quite accidental, for in one of the old Faustian histories the Gospel of St. John is one of the Biblical books which Faust is especially forbidden to study.

Whether the poodle, as a four-footed Mephistopheles, is dissatisfied with Faust's exegesis of a forbidden text, or whether he dislikes his method of contemplating the creative energy, or whether he is offended with the subject-matter of creation, being, as he admits himself, the spirit of annihilation, at any rate the growling of the poodle now becomes transformed into a violent howling and barking which quite puts a stop to Faust's Biblical speculations. Becoming angry, he threatens his guest with instant expulsion, when a marvellous metamorphosis reveals itself before his very eyes. The form of the poodle grows larger until it assumes the likeness of a hippopotamus with fiery eyes and terrible teeth. This monster does not, however, succeed in alarming Faust, who boasts that he knows a charm for such half-hell brood in " Solomon's Key ". Meanwhile a chorus of infernal spirits is heard in the passage lamenting that one of their number is trapped. Faust hastily performs his incantation, but without avail. He resorts to other conjurations, but their sole effect is to

increase still more the size of the beast, which, now like an elephant, or some indistinctly defined body of mist, appears to fill the study. He is afraid that it will escape as a mist. To prevent this he threatens it with his very strongest spell, when from out of the seeming mist comes forward Mephistopheles, disguised as a travelling scholar. He salutes Faust:—

M. What's all this row? What may be your pleasure?

F. This, then, was the kernel of the poodle—a travelling scholar. The *casus* makes me laugh.

The colloquy proceeds:—

M. I salute you, learned sir. You have made me sweat grievously.

F. What art thou called?

M. The question seems to me trifling for one who so much despises the word, who far removed from all seeming regards only the essence of things.

F. With gentlemen of your sort one may commonly infer the essence from the name, since this appears but all too plainly when men call you God of Flies, Destroyer, Liar. Now then, who art thou?

M. A part of that power which is ever willing evil and ever producing good.

F. What am I to understand by this riddle?

M. I am the spirit which for ever denies, and that rightly, since everything that comes into being deserves to be annihilated. Better were it, therefore, that nothing should exist. Hence all that you call sin, destruction, in a word, evil, is my proper element.

F. Thou callest thyself a part, yet standest before me as a whole.

M. The modest truth I tell thee. Although man—that mikrokosm of folly—commonly thinks himself a whole. I am part of that part which in the beginning was the whole—a part of darkness that gave birth to light—that proud light which now contests her ancient rank and space with Mother Night. Nevertheless, it succeeds not because, hard as it tries, it cleaves as if wedded to material bodies. It streams from bodies. It gives beauty to bodies. By a body is it broken in its course, and hence I hope it will not last long but will perish with bodies.

F. Now I know thy worthy functions. Thou canst not destroy on a great scale and so art trying to do so on a small one.

M. And to speak truth. There is not much to be done that way. The something that is opposed to nothing. I mean this clumsy world I could not manage—as often as I have tried already to get at it. Notwithstanding waves, storms, earthquakes, fire, sea and land remain after all just as they were, and there's that damned stuff, the brood of brutes and men, which one can nohow get the better of. How many have I already buried, and still ever circulates a new fresh blood! Things go

on so enough to make one mad. From air, water, earth, in dry, wet, warm, cold, germs by thousands evolve themselves. Had I not reserved fire I should have had nothing apart for myself.

F. So thou opposest thy cold devil's fist, clenched in impotent malice, to the ever-stirring, the beneficently creative power. Better try thy hand at something else, thou wondrous son of Chaos.

This passage serves to reveal the character of the unconditional denial symbolised by Mephistopheles. Not only is it negative and destructive of all truth, but of existence, which, according to Goethe, was the outward and visible sign of truth. The skepticism of Mephistopheles is in point of fact that of Buddhists, who similarly regard existence as an evil. It differs altogether from the purely suspensive inquiring *Streben* of Faust. This distinction is of prime importance for comprehending the true significance of the drama, which in part consists of the relation of the spirit of inquiry to that of denial—the antagonism of the creative and energising impulse to that which is persistently destructive.

But to resume. The next scene describes a second interview of Faust and Mephistopheles. Habited as a fashionable youth, the latter urges his new friend to dress himself in a similar style, and to accompany him in order to see "life". The tempter seems to have timed his visit opportunely. Faust is suffering from another attack of the *Weltschmerz* from which the Easter bells had but recently aroused him. To the solicitations of Mephistopheles he moodily replies: "In every dress, no doubt, I shall feel the anguish of earth's contracted life. I am too old to indulge in child's play, too young to be without a wish. What gain can the world have for me? 'Thou must renounce, thou must renounce.' That is the eternal song which rings in every one's ears, which every hour during our whole life is hoarsely singing to us. It is with terror that I wake up every morning. I could fain weep bitter tears to see the day which in its course will not fulfil a single wish for me, no, not one; which lessens even the anticipation of every pleasure with its selfish captiousness, and thwarts the creative energy of my busy breast by a thousand trifles of life. Then, again, with the fall of night must I stretch myself in anguish on my bed. Here, too, no rest is granted me. Wild dreams are certain to terrify me. The God who dwells in

my bosom can deeply stir my inwardness; (but the same being) who reigns supreme over all my powers has no control over things without, and thus existence is to me a burden. Death I ardently desire and life I abhor."

"And yet," replies Mephistopheles, "death is never an altogether welcome guest." But Faust reiterates still more strongly his eulogium of it: "O happy is he round whose brow he wreathes the blood-stained laurel in the dazzling moment of victory, whom after the maddening dance he finds in a maid's arms. Would that I had sank away hence enraptured, exanimate before the lofty spirit's power."

We have considered this passage in its relation to Werther, but it possesses further implications. It is more than a mere echo of the similar aspirations of Prometheus, of Job, and of Hamlet. The bitter mockery of renunciation, coupled with a recognition of its over-mastering might. The contrast between the self-contained indomitable personality of Faust and its powerlessness in respect of outward things are exact reproductions of Prometheus with his disclaim of submission even to the inevitable, and his lament for his impotence in respect of fate. Altogether Job-like is his wail over the woes, disappointments and perversities of each successive day and the terrifying dreams of every night. The estimate of life as a sore burden, and the longing to be delivered from it. While the lament over circumscribed powers, over an existence "weary, flat, stale and unprofitable," is distinctly Hamletic. Indeed, the final aspiration to dissolve away in some ecstatic state seems to recall Hamlet's own wish:—

Would that this too too solid flesh would melt,
Thaw and dissolve itself into a dew.

Mephistopheles sneers at Faust's enthusiasm on behalf of death, and reminds him that "a certain brown juice was not drunk up by some one on a certain night". Faust retorts that Mephistopheles is sometimes guilty of playing the spy. In reply, the latter, with a sarcastic modesty, disclaims omniscience but confesses that he knows a good deal. But the recollection of that episode, together perhaps with the covert charge of cowardice with which it is accompanied, seems to irritate Faust. On reflection he becomes indignant that his deliberate attempt on

that occasion should have been thwarted by no higher influences than some childish associations. Accordingly he bursts forth into a dire fulmination against whatever is most precious, beautiful, cheering and amiable in human life. In another sense it might be taken as a disclaimer of a philosophic and human creed, a denial of all possible constructive bases of human thought, of speculative or social truth. The passage is of the highest interest, whether considered in relation to Goethe or to Faust. In the former case it clearly indicates what were the foundations in Goethe's mind of his philosophy; what were in his estimate the supremest pleasures of his life. As to Faust it may be held to signify a temporary transition into Wertherism, into the temper of gloomy all-comprehending negation which most particularly belongs to Mephistopheles.

"Since then a sweet familiar voice drew me out from the terrible maze of thought, and betrayed the remnant of my childhood feelings with the echo of earlier times, I vent my curse on everything that winds its coil of alluring and juggling snares round the soul, and chains it to this den of wretchedness with blinding and flattering powers. Accursed before all be the lofty opinion (self-consciousness) with which the mind girds itself round. Accursed the blinding (or dazzling) of appearances that forces itself upon our senses. Accursed the treacherous wiles of dreams, the delusion of glory and of fame. Accursed whatever flatters us, as property, as wife and child, as slave and plough. Accursed be Mammon, whether when he incites us with his treasure to daring deeds or when he smooths our couch for indolent pleasures. Accursed be the balsamic juice of the grape. Accursed that highest grace of Love. Accursed be Hope. Accursed be Faith. Accursed above all the rest be Patience."

Could mortal malediction annihilate all human excellencies, powers and entities, there would be little left worth living for after the accomplishment of these terrible wishes. But it is evident that they are not to be taken in their fullest amplitude of meaning. Faust's, as a rule, is not a destroying, it is a conserving spirit, and his utterances both before and after this terrible execration justify us in concluding that his language is the momentary outcome of an indignant, passionate despair, which is not his ordinary mood. The object of the curse is, however, clear.

Mephistopheles, we are taught to see, has driven him for the time being to adopt his own destructive disposition in order to entrap him. His proposed annihilation of the world, of human self-consciousness, sensation and action, of love, joy, faith and hope, and whatsoever else gives dignity to human existence, prepares the way for his own proposal of a higher happiness than any Faust has yet tasted. Meanwhile, and for the time being, Faust's universe, the Kosmos of his noblest feelings, thoughts and aspirations, is, so far as hasty wishes can accomplish it, a wreck, and a chorus of spirits bewails the wholesale annihilation his curses are supposed to have effected. Instructed by Mephistopheles they exhort him to restore it by setting out in quest of new pleasures. Mephistopheles himself seconds these exhortations—but the passage is so important that we must give a literal translation.

M. Cease to trifle with thy grief, which, vulture-like, consumes the sources of thy life. The worst company will make thee feel that thou art still a man among men. Yet I do not mean to thrust thee amongst the pack. I am none of your great men. Yet if thou wilt in company with me take thy path through life, I will readily adapt myself to be thine upon the spot. I am thy companion, and if thou art satisfied I am thy servant, thy slave.

F. And what am I to do for thee in return?

M. For that thou hast as yet a long day of grace.

F. No! No! The devil is an egotist and does not readily for God's will what may advantage another. Speak out the condition plainly. Such a servant brings peril into the house.

M. I will bind myself to thy service here so as at thy beck neither to sleep nor rest. When we find ourselves on the other side thou must do as much for me.

F. The "other side" gives me but small concern. If one shatter this world to pieces the other may come into being as it will. Out of this earth spring my joys, and this sun shines on my sorrows. Once I can separate myself from these, what will and can may then happen, I will hear nothing further about it—whether man in a future state as well, hates and loves, and whether there be an above or below in those spheres as in our own.

M. In this mood thou mayest well venture. Bind thyself and during that time thou shalt be delighted by my arts. I will give thee what no man has hitherto seen.

F. What, poor devil, wilt thou give? Was the mind of man in its lofty effort (*Streben*) ever compassed by the like of thee? Yet thou hast food which satisfies not. Thou hast red gold which speedily like quick-

silver melts away in the hand—a game at which man is never a winner—a maiden who on my breast is already with ogles binding herself to my neighbour—the bright god-like joy of honour which vanishes like a meteor. Show me the fruit which rots before it is plucked and trees which every day renew their verdure.

M. Such a commission affrights me not. Such treasures have I at my disposal. But, good friend, the time will come in its turn when we may feast on what is really good in peace.

Faust resists an allurement which would destroy his essential nature of *Streben* and replies:—

F. If ever I lie down calmly on a bed of sloth, may there be at once an end of me. If with thy flattery thou canst beguile me into self-satisfaction, if thou canst deceive me with enjoyment, be that my last day. The wager I offer.

M. Done.

F. My hand upon it. If ever I say to the passing moment—"Stay, thou art so fair," then mayest thou cast me into chains. Then will I willingly perish. Then may the death-bell toll. Then art thou free from thy service. The clock may stand still. The index hand may fall, and time exist for me no more.

Briefly—the compact thus proposed is eventually agreed to, and Faust, after some expostulation with Mephistopheles for the want of confidence in his spoken word implied in his requirement of a written pledge, signs it in the approved Faustian manner, with his blood.

We must, however, remember that in this transaction the character of Faust has already begun to undergo very marked transformation. He is no longer the unselfish truth-seeker. No longer the ardent thinker who must in virtue of impulses he cannot resist energise for knowledge. He is here changed into the pleasure-seeker. The end of his life is no longer mental labour but sensual enjoyment. It is for this that he is content to barter his soul to the evil one. We thus see what will appear more clearly in the sequel. Goethe has failed to discriminate accurately between truth-search and mere happiness or enjoyment. Content with the passing moment for the pleasure it affords, nullifies the persistent *Streben* which is never satisfied with attainment. Indeed, Faust seems partly conscious of this change and deterioration in his aims.

Ich habe mich zu hoch gebläht
In deinen Rang gehör' ich nur.

His proposed plunge into sensuous pleasure is no doubt partly caused by his proved experience that he cannot acquire satisfactory and complete knowledge. The world of nature is closed to him, the threads of thought are snapped and knowledge has become wearisome. Besides, he contrives to disguise the real import of his proposed change of pursuit by alleging that his desire is not primarily happiness, but the wish to experience in his own person all human emotions of whatever kind. He indulges in a rhapsody on this point, which is not altogether ridiculous and unsuitable, because something of the kind is found in the old Faustian legends.¹

"My breast, which is purged from the love of knowledge, shall for the future bare itself to every human pang, and all that is parcelled out among mankind, I will enjoy in my own heart's core," etc.

But, setting aside the absurdity of this new desire, as well as the psychological falsehood that it could ever have formed a motive of energy to any sane man, it is in reality a transference of infinity from knowledge to enjoyment. Omniscience failing him, Faust would fain experience all feeling. Mephistopheles ridicules his exorbitant wishes, alleging that they are only fit for a God. There are, he says, uncombinable opposites in humanity, which if they could be found harmoniously joined together in an individual, he would style such a man "Mr. Mikrokosm".

"If that be the case," asks Faust, "what am I?"

Mephistopheles replies by stating the same philosophical truth which he has already learnt in the "thunder-word" of the earth-spirit. "Thou art, in fine, just what thou art. Put on wigs with millions of curls, set thy foot on ell-high socks, thou still remainest what thou art."

¹ Mr. Filmore, for example, quotes from a Faustian poem the following definition of "emotional omniscience," as the sum total of all human feeling might perhaps be termed:—

"So lang ein Kuss auf Erden glüht
Der nicht durch meine Seele sprüht,
So lang ein Schmerz auf Erden klagt
Der nicht an meinem Herzen nagt,
So lang ich nicht allwaltend bin
Wär' Ich viel lieber ganz dahin."

At last Faust is compelled to acknowledge the painful truth. Notwithstanding his life-long efforts he is just as far from attaining infinity as ever. Like all free aspiring thinkers he is inclined to bewail his restricted powers, when Mephistopheles consoles him by pointing out the real enjoyments which are within human reach. "When I can buy six horses are not their powers mine?" he asks. "I gallop along, a proper man, as if I had four-and-twenty legs." He exhorts him to let his senses have their due swing, and adds the contemptuous estimate of the mere theoriser: "A fellow who speculates is like a beast driven by an evil spirit round and round in a circle on a barren heath, while fair green pastures lie everywhere around". These "green pastures" of sensuous delights Faust agrees to explore. Meanwhile their conference is disturbed by a student—"a freshman" who has come to seek an interview with the famous doctor. Faust refuses to see him, and Mephistopheles, disguising himself in his gown and cap, proposes to represent him.

The scene which follows may well pair off with the dialogue of Faust and Wagner in the earlier part of the drama, with, however, some distinction. The former colloquy is between a skeptical inquirer and a pedant who not only believes in knowledge, but is confident that he has obtained it. The latter is between Mephistopheles—the spirit of negation—and an innocent unformed student, equally credulous as to the existence and excellency of human knowledge, though inexperienced in her methods. Here, then, we have not so much the spirit of questioning doubt which marks the converse of Faust and Wagner, as the mocking cynicism which despises and ridicules all truth-search of whatever kind. It is the spirit which Goethe found in such thinkers as Hüsken, Behrisch, Merck and Basedow; and of which Agrippa's work on the vanity of all human sciences was to him the greatest literary exponent. In entire harmony with his character as the spirit of lies, Mephistopheles takes his professor's chair with a complacent reflection on the havoc he has already made of the noblest faculties once possessed and believed in by Faust. "Only despise reason and knowledge, man's chiefest power, only let thyself be confirmed in delusions and sorcery by the spirit of lies, and I have thee unconditionally." He says that fate has given to Faust a spirit which presses ever

forwards irresistibly, and his too eager effort (*Streben*) overleaps the joys of life. He threatens to drag him through a wild life, through scenes of vapid unmeaningness. He shall sprawl, stand amazed, stick fast, and for his insatiableness shall food and drink wave before his craving lips. He will entreat for refreshment in vain, and even if he had not given himself to the devil he must in any case have gone to wreck—important words, whether taken as a forecast of the coming scenes in which Faust is constrained to appear, or signifying the diabolical estimate of human *Streben* when unlimited, so contrary to the value placed on that energy by God.

The student now enters. He respectfully salutes, as he supposes, the renowned Doctor Faust, and, after exchange of compliments, gravely, but with the greatest *naïveté*, recounts the causes which have impelled him to come to the university. He says he “would fain learn something worth learning in the world”. The colloquy then proceeds:—

M. You are here at the very place for it.

Stud. To say the truth I would gladly be out again. These walls, these halls are by no means to my taste. The space is exceedingly confined. There is not a tree—nothing green to be seen, and in the halls, on the benches, hearing, sight and thought fail me.

M. It is all a matter of habit. The child does not at first take kindly to its mother’s breast, but soon finds a pleasure in nourishing itself. Just so will you daily experience a greater pleasure at the breasts of Wisdom.

Stud. I shall hang delightedly upon her neck, do but tell me how I am to attain to it.

M. Explain yourself before you further go. What faculty do you select?

Stud. I should wish to become truly learned, and would fain comprehend what is upon earth and in heaven—Science and Nature.

M. You are on the right track. Yet must you not pursue your studies in a desultory manner.

Stud. I am enlisted soul and body in the cause. Yet I should certainly like a little freedom and relaxation on bright summer holidays.

M. Make most of time, it slips away so fast. Yet order teaches you to gain time. For this reason, my dear friend, I advise you to begin with a course of logic. Thereby is the mind well broken in—laced up in Spanish boots—so that it creeps guardedly forward on the thought-path, and does not, like an *ignis fatuus*, flicker here and

there in all directions. Then many a day will you be taught that one, two, three is necessary for that which you formerly hit off at a blow as easy as eating and drinking. It is with thought-fabric, forsooth, as with a weaver's master-piece when one treadle moves a thousand threads. The shuttle shoots hither and thither, the threads move unseen, ties by thousands are struck off at a blow. The philosopher, he steps in and proves to you it must have been so. The first should be so, the second so, and therefore the third and fourth so; and if the first and second were not, the third and fourth could never be. The scholars of all countries prize this, but none have become weavers. He who will know and describe anything living seeks first to drive the soul out of it. Then has he the parts in his hand, only, unluckily, the spiritual bond is lacking. Chemistry terms it *Eucheiresis Naturæ* and mocks herself, she knows not how.

Stud. I cannot quite understand you.

M. That will soon follow if you learn to reduce and classify all things properly.

Stud. To me it all seems so bewildering as if a mill-wheel were revolving in my head.

M. Next and before all other things must you apply yourself to metaphysics. Then see that you profoundly grasp what was not meant for human brain. For what enters therein and does not enter therein a fine word will stand you in good stead. But take care for the first half-year to adopt the strictest regularity. You will have five Lectures every day. Be in your place as the clock strikes. Be well prepared beforehand, with your paragraphs thoroughly conned, that you may see the better that he says nothing but what is in the book, yet in your writing be as zealous as if the Holy Ghost were dictating to you.

Stud. You need not tell me that a second time. I can perceive how useful it is. For what one possesses in black and white he can carry home in comfort.

M. But choose a faculty.

Stud. To jurisprudence I cannot reconcile myself.

M. I cannot find much fault with you, I know how it stands with that science. Laws and rights descend like a perpetual disease. They trail down from generation to generation and glide imperceptibly from place to place. Reason becomes nonsense. Beneficence, a plague. Woe to thee that thou art a grandson. Of the law that is born with us—of that, unfortunately, there is never any question.

Stud. You increase my distaste for it. Oh, happy is he whom you teach. I think I should like to study theology.

M. I do not wish to mislead you. As for this science, it is so difficult to avoid the wrong way. There is so much hidden poison in it, and this is so hard to distinguish from medicine. Best is it also here to listen only to one and swear by the master's words. On the whole stick to words. Then will you pass by the safe gate into the temple of certainty.

Stud. But there must be some meaning in the words.

M. Very true, only one must not be too anxious about that. For it is just where meanings fail that a word comes in most opportunely. With words may controversies be admirably carried on. With words may a system be erected. Words form a capital subject for belief. From a word no iota dares to be stolen.

Stud. Pardon me. I detain you by my many questions, but I must still trouble you. Would you kindly give me a little appropriate advice about medicine? Three years is a short time, and the field, God knows, is far too wide. If one has but a hint, one can feel one's way along further.

M. (aside). I am weary of this prosing style. I must play the devil properly again. *(Aloud.)* The spirit of medicine is easy to be caught. You study through the great and little world to let things go on in the end as it pleases God. It is in vain that you wander scientifically in all directions. Each man learns only what he can. Yet he who seizes the passing moment, that is the true man. You are fairly well built, nor will you be wanting in boldness. And if you only trust in yourself other souls will trust in you. Especially learn to guide the women, to cure their eternal ohs and ahs, manifold as they are, from a single point. For if they only half believe in you, you have them all under your thumb. A title must first convince them that your art surpasses many arts. You may then welcomely touch boldly on many matters round which another would fumble many years. Learn to press their little pulses adroitly, and boldly clasp them about their taper waists with fiery wanton glances, just to see how tightly they are laced.

Stud. There is some sense in that. One sees, at any rate, the when and the how.

M. Grey, my dear friend, is all theory, and green the golden tree of life.

Stud. I vow to you, all seems a dream to me. Might I trouble you another time to hear your wisdom speak upon the grounds?

M. What help I can give shall willingly be given.

Stud. I can by no means depart without placing my common-place book in your hands. Grant me this token of your favour.

M. Willingly. *(He writes and gives it back.)*

Stud. (reads). Evites sicut Deus, scientes bonum et malum.

M. Only follow the old saw, and my cousin the snake, and some time or other you, with your likeness to God, will be sorry enough.

Regarded as a knowledge drama, this scene is one of the most important in the whole compass of Goethe's *Faust*. It reminds us of the opening soliloquy in which Faust admits his dissatisfaction with all his knowledge attainments, due allowance being made for the difference between the cynical negation of Mephis-

topheles and the earnestness which marks the human inquirer. Both alike express what we know from other sources to have been Goethe's own profound impatience with the subjects and methods of the popular science of his time. His condemnation of human knowledge, taking it as a whole, is as complete and unsparing as Agrippa's *Vanity of the Arts and Sciences*. Not a single science is exempt from his cynical mockery. Logic, chemistry, metaphysics, jurisprudence, theology, human language, medicine are condemned *seriatim*, and with the most perfect impartiality. Not less Goethean, also, is the conclusion of the sere and withered condition of theory and the greenness of the tree of life.

It is now conceded by the best Faustian critics that the next two scenes, the orgies in Auerbach's cellar and the witch's cave, can have no part in that conception of Faust which regards him as a truth-searcher. Nor can they be said to form a promising starting-point for the notion which substitutes sensuous pleasure for truth as the object of Faust's inquiry. Notwithstanding his compact with Mephistopheles and his desire for some moment so pleasurable as to prompt a wish for its continuance, Faust can have no sympathy with the sottish delights of drunken revellers assembled in a low pot-house. Indeed, he would seem to have watched the whole proceedings with ill-concealed disgust. His own reflections on the drinking goblet and the reminiscences it conjured up are sufficient to show what small influence the pleasures of wine had on Faust in his own natural youth. Hardly less loathsome to the refined and poetic thinker—though somewhat falling in with his later devotion to magic—are the grotesquely obscene proceedings of the witch's cavern. Dramatically, however, this scene is important, for here Faust partakes of the magic potion which puts back the current of his life some thirty years. Such a transformation scene gives, no doubt, a certain measure of probability to Faust's subsequent conduct, but it is attended by the drawback that passions and sensibilities are attributed to him which he does not seem to have felt in his own true and unbewitched youth. From this point, then, we have represented another Faust—a man whose feelings, interests and aspirations stand in the most violent contrast to those of a true philosopher. The studious recluse is transformed into a fashion-

able gallant. His divine *Streben* for truth and knowledge is converted into selfish lust. His doubt of ultimate certainty is transmuted into a far more mischievous disbelief in virtue. The drama of Faust, in a word, is like its hero, a centaur. Its earlier portion represents the head and heart of a man, the noblest of his species, while its latter half might be fittingly symbolised by the baser parts and mere animal functions of a beast. This momentous change in the character of Faust has often been noticed by his commentators in terms of reprehension, and all the more because the episode of Faust and Gretchen is not found in the original Faust legends. Probably Goethe's reasons for combining in a single impersonation the opposed characteristics of the student and profligate were these :—

1. The conception contained in the mediæval Faust legends of a man who is anxious to drain the cup, not of one, but of all pleasures, who strives after all attainments, and desires to share every species of fruition.

2. The demands of popular dramatic interest.

3. Goethe's estimate of every man as a composite many-sided "nature"—a convergence, not only of varying, but opposed powers and faculties.

4. His determination to embody in Faust (1) that peculiar union of intellectual culture and sensuous passion which marked his own eccentric nature; (2) the divergent faculties and tendencies which pertain to the race.

But how inadequate and inconsistent these reasons are when regarded as a basis for the Gretchen episode in Faust, a little reflection will serve to prove.

1. We must allow that the craving for infinite knowledge may be, and has been, a passion of enormous power in the greatest thinkers in the world's history; but a similar yearning in the region of passion and sensuous pleasure can characterise only an extreme and unnatural sensualist. The first passion, notwithstanding its possible extravagance, is noble, elevating and generous, the latter is sordid and selfish to an extreme degree. That the two should co-exist and co-operate within the confines of any single human personality is a proposition refuted by the most elementary laws of psychology. Such a union of incompatibles would deserve more than the

sarcastic name which Mephistopheles would bestow on it—"Mr. Mikrokosm"; for the disorder inseparable from such a conjunction of the material and spiritual would entitle its possessor to be called "Mr. Makrochaos". Besides, there is no more than a superficial and utterly misleading analogy between fruition regarded as a response to bodily and mental craving. No doubt both are capable of being stated under the same head or general definition, *Streben*, but there the analogy ends. The motives, methods and aims of the searchers are not only diverse, but antagonistic. He who determinedly sets forth on the quest of truth has not the slightest impulse towards sensual gratification; indeed, he is instinctively aware that any such object would only divert him from his true aim. On the other hand, the sensualist is the last man to appreciate the purely spiritual pleasure which comes from the exercise of the intellect independently of any ulterior object. To the possible objection that the Faust thus represented is not the true Faust, that he has been rejuvenated by the witch's draught and regenerated by Satanic inspiration, that his whole inward being, with its motives, tendencies, etc., has not only been transformed, but absolutely inverted, the answer must be made that Goethe himself never really intended such a violent transmutation. No doubt it would have been better for the consistency and probability of the latter half of his drama if he had done so—whatever violence he would thereby have offered to the unity of his conception as a whole. Indeed, there are a few indications which may possibly signify that he once contemplated some such radical destruction of what we must regard as Faust's original personality, but it is quite certain that if this was the case he never carried out his idea. The general notion he evidently meant his readers to cherish of Faust in his passion period is that of an elderly, thoughtful scholar, on whose being have been grafted, by diabolical intervention, certain vehement youthful passions, and who thereby blends with an ardent love of truth and philosophical speculation the propensities and pursuits of a selfish *roué*. How much of the original element of the philosopher is still left in Faust is shown by his occasional reasonings with Mephistopheles, by his temporary withdrawal from the object of his pursuit to indulge in solitary meditation, by the tone of those meditations, by the kind of converse he sometimes holds

with Gretchen. But these characteristics merely serve to bring into greater relief the dichotomy in his being and the irreconcilable nature, judged from an ordinary human standpoint, of its component qualities. The objection is only partly met by remembering the source of Goethe's inspiration—the Faust of the old legends, conceived as a man arid of all pleasures, sensual and intellectual, and reckless as to the means whereby they are obtained. Regarded as a mythical personage, a being out of all relation to human thought and action, such a personage is doubtless conceivable. But we must remember that however much he had been struck with the idea when perusing the Faust legends, Goethe virtually abandons it at the very starting-point of his actual drama. Like all mythical creations, the original Faust of the legends is a superhuman monster, gigantic in power, in audacity and in desire. What Goethe aimed at constructing was an actual man, guided by human propensities and feelings, and professing to be bound, so far as he himself is concerned, by ordinary moral and social restraints. Carrying out this project, Goethe seems to have made the mistake of suffering himself to be unconsciously biassed by mythic and extra-human ideas when creating a human character.

2. The theory that the Gretchen episode is needed in order to establish an interest in the character of Faust can only be urged by those who have very imperfect or unworthy ideas of the true sources of dramatic interest. In brief terms, these may be defined as all human action, all human passion. Among the rest, how great and absorbing an interest may be created by truth-search, or by the effort to attain and diffuse enlightenment, is shown by the fact that such an aim characterises some of the greatest dramas of the world's literature. Nor as long as men are what they are, gifted with the intellectual powers and aspirations they possess, could it well be otherwise. To the genuine thinker a narrative of truth-search has all the fascination, and something of the excitement, that a story of hunting difficult game in a difficult country has for the sportsman. Has not truth-search—man's perpetual conflict with the unknowable—its own difficulties and dangers, its doubts and fluctuations, its hopes and fears, its apparent triumphs and real defeats? Has it not had its champions, its confessors, and its martyrs? Is it not sufficient

of itself to fill the life rôle of the greatest and most gifted among men? Do we need the attraction of sensual passion selfishly pursued, to awaken our interest in the struggles and labours of Prometheus or in the invincible self-reliance and sense of justice of Job? Has not Hamlet, with his immoderate indulgence in many-sided ratiocination, a fascination for the thinker quite independent of his passion for Ophelia? Nor can it be urged that such a paroxysm of sensuality was needed to manifest the malignity of hellish powers, since Faust's escapades under the influence of his Satanic mentor might easily have taken a direction just as mischievous and diabolical while preserving some congruity with his original nature. They might have taken a Titanic direction of defiance of Deity, inordinate ambition, grasping avarice, intolerant pride or selfishness, or some other vice having a more or less intellectual origin. This is in point of fact the idea of the old Faust legends, to which any such narrative as that of Gretchen is unknown. These represent Faust's ill-doings after his infernal compact as quite of another kind—consisting of mischievous manifestations of magical power, over-weening ambition, insatiable greed, a proud disdain both of God and man—and we must allow that they have thus better preserved the harmony of Faust's original nature than Goethe has done. Besides, even allowing the customary exigencies which render the presentation of the chiefest human passion necessary to every great drama, it may safely be alleged that to most readers of this portion of Faust, the interest centres, not in the hero, but in Gretchen herself. The combination of grace, simplicity and true womanly tenderness which she impersonates, proves irresistibly attractive, while the cold, calculating lust, the libertine selfishness, the fiendish cruelty of her paramour are only fitted to excite feelings of horror and repugnance. No rightly constituted mind could possibly entertain any other sentiment for the profligate wiles which have their literary home in the scrofulous pages of French romance. In the terrible success which attends those machinations—the wholesale ruin of an innocent family—Goethe has even surpassed these productions. That he was not actuated by any moral purpose in doing this, is proved by the fact that no part of this ruin falls on Faust, nor does he exhibit any adequate remorse for having caused it. The casual reproaches

he vents on Mephistopheles are fully met by the question of the latter: "Wer war's, der sie in verderben stürzte, Ich oder du?" Professor Vischer observes that Goethe has here forgotten his own purpose, and that Faust has ceased to put forth any virtuous *Streben*, it would not be too much to say that his original effort for truth and virtue has here taken an opposite course and is enlisted in the service of vice. Indeed, if the Gretchen episode could be quite isolated from all the remainder of the drama, including the second part, it would go far to prove the hypothesis that there is no trace of any moral tendency in Faust. Some critics have tried to justify Faust's cruelty to Gretchen by the argument that Mephistopheles has induced him to accept and follow his own destructive *rôle*, but this is at once refuted by the fact that the disciple, notwithstanding his bargain, has by no means surrendered himself absolutely to his infernal mentor's guidance, but retains his own opinions, his own volition, and, to a great extent, his own freedom of action.

3. More may possibly be urged for the notion that Goethe intended to embody in Faust his ideal man as a composite being or "nature," made up not only of diversified, but even conflicting qualities and tendencies, as the man of action as well as contemplation, as the sensualist no less than the philosopher. But even admitting the occasional, but rare, union of such incongruities, Goethe should have allowed for and striven to imitate nature's observance of due proportion, subordination and fitness in these anomalous creations. Notwithstanding her fitful partiality for diversity, she never created in any one living being a combination of man and angel, beast and bird, such as we have represented in the Bulls of Assyrian sculpture, in which opposite qualities not only co-exist, but enjoy a co-equal degree of manifestation. Faust, for example, is so great a philosopher as to render mere sensualism an impossibility, and as great a sensualist as if the passion-cooling influence of philosophy and reason were utterly foreign to his nature.

4. We have already granted that Faust is a dramatic reproduction of its author, and some apology for the inconsistencies in his character may be found in that fact. But this cannot be considered adequate. No man was more fully aware than Goethe of the abnormal character of his individuality. It is true he did

not care to obtrude it on public attention, still less to exaggerate its strange or excessive aspects. In this respect he forms a complete contrast to Montaigne, who was always willing to pose as a human monstrosity, not only in private but in public. Still among the circle of his own private friends Goethe was quite prepared to plead guilty to extreme eccentricity, and sometimes in a playful mood was not averse to a little self-ridicule on that account. Not that his own oral testimony was needed to establish the fact, it was amply attested by almost every act of his life. Still his undoubted consciousness of his peculiarity ought to have prevented his representation of himself as a type of ordinary humanity, especially in the caricature portrayed in *Faust*. For we must acknowledge that *Faust* in his dealings with Gretchen goes beyond Goethe in the non-human character of his lust. The latter in his general relations with the sex betrays a coldly selfish as well as a sensual nature, but he would hardly have gone to the extent of *Faust* in his ruthless betrayal of maiden innocence without manifesting more compunction for the dire consequences of his wayward passion.

But the strongest argument of all others for *Faust*'s inconsistencies is that in his later form, as conceived by Goethe, he symbolises, not the individual, however large his nature or diversiform his qualities, but the race. He represents human effort and human shortcoming—whatever men have done or suffered, the perpetual *Streben*, and, consequently, the combined advance and retrogression which constitute the progress of humanity. We have already noticed how much this idea of an *all-mensch* took hold of the early *Faust* legends. We have thus in Goethe's work a development from the individual philosopher and truth-seeker, with which the drama commences, to the half-abstract ideal of struggling and falling, yet ever progressing humanity with which it ends. Nor is this development limited to *Faust*. Less distinctly marked, we find it also in Gretchen. As the power becomes changed into an abstract *all-mensch*, the latter is ultimately transformed into the *ewig-weibliche*. But in this transformation Goethe has in effect destroyed his first idea. The universal man absorbs and destroys the individual humanity whence it originated. The *eternally womanly* loses the Gretchen personality which gave it birth. Besides, the process entails the

entire destruction of all genuine sources of human interest. With Faust in his first presentation, with Gretchen in her original portraiture, we can fully sympathise, but with the same personages as embodiments of all humanity or all womanity we can no longer feel any sympathetic interest. They are either abstract entities removed as far as possible from our ordinary existence, or they are monstrosities whose motives and feelings we are quite unable to understand. There are few readers of Goethe's great work in its entirety who have not experienced a gradual decrease of interest in all his chief characters. Even Mephistopheles, whose personality is at first so vividly, strikingly and clearly defined, becomes in the second part a vague, shadowy, irresolute and altogether uninteresting personage. No doubt the great interval in time between the first conception and ultimate form of Goethe's Faustian creations helps to account for these inconsistencies; nothing can justify such imperfections in a work of art.

But though Faust in the Gretchen episode seems to have forgotten his original *rôle* of truth-search, and is content to demean himself as a selfish profligate, it is fair to remember that glimpses of his originally higher nature occasionally disclose themselves. Thus, in the very heat of his lustful pursuit, his first love of nature and solitude returns, and for a time masters him. He communes with the spirit of nature in the wood and mountain cavern. He recognises its presence in calm and in storm. What is yet more remarkable, he perceives in these scenes, and in his own attitude to them of poetic reflection, a passing glimpse of his former personality. He addresses the nature-spirit:—

Dann fährst du mich zur sichern Höhle, zeigst
Mich dann mir selbst, und meiner eignen Brust
Geheime tiefe Wunder öffnen sich.

He confesses that he cannot now take the pure delight in nature which he once did. His unholy passion for Gretchen—the whirl and stir of sensual excitement—forms a counteracting element which prevents his enjoyment of the purer pleasures of the intellect and imagination. He describes this tumult of restless passion in words which vividly recall Shelley's expression "Love's sad satiety":—

So tauml' ich von Begierde zu Genuss
Und im Genuss verschmacht' ich nach Begierde.

He undergoes, in other words, the physical counterpart to the restlessness of his intellectual life. More fully, however, the return of his skeptical cynical mood is manifested in his conversations with Gretchen. Thus we are reminded of the old student and his contempt for human wisdom by his bitter comment on the term "verständig," which she deems the sole attribute of those who can worthily claim to be his friends.

O Beste! Glaube, was man so verständig kennt
Ist oft mehr Eitelkeit und Kurzsinn.

But the scene in which Faust's skepticism is suffered to transpire most fully and earnestly in his intercourse with Gretchen is the well-known one called his "Confession of Faith". This title is, however, a misnomer. The passage is a confession of unfaith—an eloquent and profound admission of doubt, not so much in Deity as in the nature and attributes assigned to him by human creeds and dogmas. As it bears so directly on our special subject of Faust's skepticism, we must ask permission to quote it. To Gretchen's expressed fear that her lover did not believe in God, he replies:—

Name him who dare?
And who declare
In him belief?
Feel him who can?
And durst that man
Refuse belief?
The All-Embracer—
The All-Sustainer—
Doth he not embrace and sustain
Thee, me, himself?
Is not the vault of heaven above us spread?
Lies not the earth so firmly at our feet?
And do not the eternal stars
Mount ever upwards with their kindly glance?
Do I not gaze upon thee—eye to eye?
And all—doth it not press
Upon thy head and heart?
And in eternal secrecy enweave,
Unseen, yet visible, its web around thee?
Therewith fill up thy heart—though great it be;
And when—thus wholly feeling—thou art blest

Then call it what thou wilt,
 Call it Bliss, Heart, Love, God,
 No name for it have I,
 Feeling is all ;
 Name is but sound and smoke
 O'er-clouding heaven's glow.

This famous passage is among the most interesting in the whole drama, not only because it brings back to us Faust's earlier speculations, but because it reveals incidentally Goethe's own convictions on the subject of Deity and his mode of arriving at them. The consideration of its manifold import, however, lies beyond our present scope. We can only refer to it as establishing Faust's skepticism and the subjective, individual basis on which, like Prometheus, Job and Hamlet, he places all truth.

In the remainder of the first part of Faust there is nothing which deserves notice from our standpoint of regarding it as a knowledge-drama. Faust finds himself enmeshed for a short time in the sensual coils he has woven, only the punishment, unluckily, does not fall upon him who is unquestionably the chief criminal, but brings wholesale destruction and ruin on an innocent household.

The question has often been asked why Goethe did not terminate his tragedy with the first part and the death of Gretchen. The answer may probably be found in his own admission to Zelster.¹ "I was not born for a tragic poet, my nature is too conciliating. Hence no really tragic situation interests me, for it is in its essence irreconcilable." Without disputing, however, the truth whether of Goethe's self-diagnosis or his conception of tragedy, it may be doubted whether he was justified in making a knowledge-drama so extravagantly tragical. Is Faust's knowledge or attainment of truth in any way advanced by the ruin and death of Gretchen, or by the murder of her child, her mother and her brother? No doubt intellectual inquiry and truth-diffusion may entail suffering, as we have seen in the case of Prometheus. The general fate of such a life-work Goethe has himself described :—

Hat man von je gekreuzigt und verbrannt.

¹ Quoted by Lewes, *ut supra*, p. 302.

The effort may possibly make shipwreck of a man's dearest convictions, it may produce some measure of painful uncertainty in the minds of others. In particular departments of science, for example, experimental physiology, it may entail physical suffering. But all these are consequences of truth-search, with which the seduction of Gretchen has absolutely nothing in common. There was no conceivable gap in Faust's speculation which his immoral success could be said to have filled as so much definitive knowledge. With his profound knowledge of humanity he could not have wanted an attestation of the strength and selfishness of human passions, nor of the depth and tenderness of woman's love. Supposing for a moment that this episode could be truly characterised as a legitimate tragical issue of knowledge-search, then the sensual pursuits of the most debased of mankind could claim some measure of justification—a *reductio ad absurdum*—than which nothing could be more absurd.

While, however, we regard Gretchen's ruin and its tragical circumstances as unnecessary to the development of Goethe's original conception of Faust, we certainly find in the second part some attempt at re-introducing the primary idea of Faust as a truth-seeker. It is this which gives the second part the small modicum of interest which from our standpoint it may be said to possess; it is, however, too vague and insignificant to modify the general verdict as to this production of Goethe. The startling inferiority of this in comparison with the first part has become an axiom with the best Faustian critics. No language has been thought too severe to reprehend its grotesque shapelessness of form, its motley assemblage of bizarre and uncouth creations. While styled a tragedy, it is in reality an ill-shaped, incongruous combination of comedy, miracle-play, melodrama and pantomime. But beneath this unwieldy mass of genius, imagination and absurdity, a few traces of the genuine Faust are dimly discernible. These relate (1) to the primary rôle of the hero, the *Streben* which forms in theory the ground principle of all his action; (2) to Goethe's secondary and super-imposed conception of Faust as a representative of collective humanity.

The former purpose is indicated in the opening scene, wherein Faust describes himself moved by a powerful impulse—

Zum nächsten Daseyn immerfort zu streben—

in other words, to the original motive principle of his intellectual course. But the *Streben* of the second part of Faust is not quite the same as that manifested in the earlier half of the first part. At the commencement of the latter his energy is directed towards truth and knowledge, while towards the close it is perverted to sensuous indulgence, but in the second part it seems mainly expended on culture, regarded as the property of the race, on the elements of human civilisation and refinement, on the means and conditions of social and political progress. We have, in other words, lost Faust as a man, and instead, we have a mystical incarnation of powers and influences which tend to rule, at least which ought, in Goethe's opinion, to rule the world. Thus he represents vaguely humanity in its ideal perpetual effort to achieve the highest stages of civilised culture, and more particularly he symbolises Goethe's own personal aspirations in the various directions of thought, progress and culture. For example, he expresses in art Goethe's favourite ideal of the union of Teutonic with Hellenic art-culture: in science, his preference for the Neptunist to the Plutonist theory of the origin of the earth as well as his opinions on other points of physical science; in philosophy, his preference of the concrete for the abstract and his dislike of transcendentalism; in politics, his opinion of the union of Church and State and his denunciation of ecclesiastical greed; in agriculture, his notions on the improvements of which he thought it capable. In short, we have a kind of rambling prospective vision of the general advance of humanity, conceived from the standpoint of Goethe in his old age. The enthusiastic utterance of these forecasts of the future of humanity brings about the *dénouement* of the drama, for Faust, whom Goethe has invested for the time with his own sanguine temperament, is so far excited with these prospects that he lets fall by chance the ominous desire which he had long since defied Mephistopheles to compel him to utter. Speaking of these anticipations, he says:—

Solch ein Gewimmel möchte ich sehn
 Auf freiem Grund mit freiem Volke stehn.
 Zum Augenblicke dürft ich sagen
 Verweile doch! du bist so schön.

Im Vorgefühl von solchem nähem Glück
 Geniess' ich jetzt den nächsten Augenblick.

In this admission Faust pronounces his death-sentence, and, in accordance with his compact with Mephistopheles, his deliverance into his power. But Faust's exultant forecast of future bliss for humanity is procured, not by any suggestion or agency of Mephistopheles, but by anticipations altogether opposed to his wishes. Moreover, all Faust's lifelong impulses and energies, both good and bad (we must except Gretchen's seduction), are comprised under the saving definition of *Streben*. For this reason he has deserved final deliverance. The angel who bears through the higher atmosphere the immortal part of Faust thus announces the final verdict on his persistent though wayward effort, and proclaims at the same time the moral of the drama :—

Gerettet ist das edle Glied
Der Geisterwelt vom Bösen :
Wer immer strebend sich bemüht
Den können wir erlösen.

.

The foregoing analysis of Goethe's greatest work will enable us to adjudge its position among the other great knowledge dramas of the world.

Its chief point of difference when contrasted with "Prometheus" and "Job" is the incomparably greater breadth of its scope. If "Prometheus" is like a choice bit of mountain scenery combining majesty with graceful beauty—if "Job" resembles a sylvan scene—an oak-forest, for example—full of picturesque variety, yet not admitting of any extensive outlook, nor altogether free from gloom—"Faust" is like a broad, diversified, many-hued landscape, composed of wood, plain and water, lofty mountains alternating with level champaign, deep rivers with rapid torrents, bare rocky steeps with wooded ravines—the whole intersected in countless directions by a perpetually varying chequer of sunlight and shadow. Or, regarding the comparison from the standpoint of human history, if "Prometheus" represents that stage of Greek thought in which mythology gives place to self-consciousness and independent thought, if "Job" portrays Hebrew speculation at a similar stage, Goethe's "Faust" gives us the extreme directions as well as the many varieties of all modern European speculation from the mediæval ages to the present time. Or, once more regarding them as stages in human freedom, the first says to

humanity: "You may criticise mythological or traditional ideas of God when they are inconsistent with justice". The second says: "You may question religious conceptions of Deity as well as of human duty when these conflict with man's freedom and his moral consciousness". The third, including and far extending all prior permissions of the kind, says: "You may question all supposed knowledge of a speculative kind, no matter what its origin, extent or sanction". For, as we have seen, there is really no limit to the critical skepticism of "Faust". All objects of human knowledge and study—physical science no less than philosophy and theology—are involved in the same misty incertitude, and the sole task of humanity, according to Goethe, is perpetual *Streben* or search, accompanied though this be with continual liability to error.

We must not, however, forget the twofold aspect of the skepticism in "Faust". Side by side with his suspense, and contradistinguished from it both in aim and origin, is the destructive tendency of Mephistopheles. Goethe seems to have recognised the profound truth that inquiry is just as much opposed to negation as to affirmation, though it is interesting to notice that even in the rôle of Mephistopheles he discerns some kind of utility, for in some of its phases destruction is the inevitable counterpart of production in nature. Still, in its sense of annihilation, in its effort to reduce the wondrous universe of vitality to a mere Ewigleere (eternal vacuum), it represents that aspect which was ever most repulsive to Goethe, and whatever justification can be claimed for it is accordingly left to Mephistopheles himself. No doubt the ultimate escape of Faust from the clutches of his Satanic companion must be held to symbolise Goethe's conviction of the preference of suspense to negation. As we have seen, the drama begins with the maxim that error must accompany inquiry, and ends with the verdict that inquiry is a condition of final human redemption. Hence we might say that perpetual search receives in "Faust" its benediction and apotheosis.

The reflex bearing of the drama on the intellectual character deserves a brief concluding word. It is only by comparing, as we have done, the sentiments and modes of thought found in "Faust" with illustrations from his remaining works as well as from his life, that we are able to estimate the full measure of Goethe's own

critical skepticism. While it is evident that he disliked negative thought, and was suspicious of transcendental schemes of philosophy, he never attempted anything like a scientific estimate of pure skepticism and was especially ignorant of the results in that direction of later Greek speculation. To him, with his perpetual culture of serenity, inquiring suspense, as he interpreted it, meant conflict, unrest and disturbance. Not improbably, he laid more stress on the search than on the perpetual equipoising which was its true philosophical basis. Hence he arrived at the *Streben* ideal of Faust without being aware that he was on the track of the Greek skeptics, and that his serenity was not dissimilar to their boasted *ataraxia*. He must, therefore, be pronounced a genuine but unconscious skeptic. While he dogmatised, not always justly, on what seemed to him *physical facts*, he was content to leave ulterior and final causes together with all matters of pure speculation in their own formal obscurity. He recognised incertitude on most subjects of human investigation as the normal lot of humanity, and in all the researches of his life he breathed the *Streben* aspiration of his dying moments—*mehr Licht!*

SHAKESPEARE'S HAMLET.

MOTTOES.

- Sir NICH. . . . *I swim most exquisitely on land.*
 BRUCE. *Do you intend to practise in the water, sir?*
 Sir NICH. *Never, sir; I hate the water, I never come upon the water, sir.*
 LONG. *Then there will be no use of swimming.*
 Sir NICH. *I content myself with the speculative part of swimming, I care not for the practice. I seldom bring anything to use; 'tis not my way. Knowledge is my ultimate end.*

SHADWELL, *The Virtuoso*.

Die Höhe reizt uns, nicht die Stufen; den Gipfel im Auge wandeln wir gerne auf der Ebene.

GOETHE, *Wilhelm Meisters Lehrjahre*, book ix.

. . . *The wound of peace is surety,
 Surety secure; but modest doubt is call'd
 The beacon of the wise, the tent that searches
 To the bottom of the worst.*

SHAKESPEARE, *Troilus and Cressida*, ii., 2.

*Es sind nur wenige, die den Sinn haben und zugleich zur That fähig sind.
 Der Sinn erweitert, aber lähmt; die That belebt, aber beschränkt.*

GOETHE, *Wilhelm Meisters Lehrjahre*, book viii., ch. v.

SHAKESPEARE'S "Hamlet" may be said to possess a threefold connection with the skeptical dramas we have already considered.

1. Like all the others, it represents man in relation to some inevitable fact or circumstance, some coercive restriction or limitation of his being. Hence just as "Prometheus" represents him in relation on the one hand to Hellenic mythology, on the other, to material progress and enlightenment, just as "Job" exhibits him in reference to Hebrew ideas of providence and retribution, just as "Faust" portrays him in relation to knowledge and the insoluble problems of the universe, just as Calderon's "El Magico Prodigioso" considers him in relation to theological dogma, so does "Hamlet" describe him in relation to fate, human surroundings and human duty. Now it is evident that this, like every other enforced relation, or inevitable environment pertaining to humanity, may be just as productive of antagonism and conflict, of indecision and suspense, of free-thought and speculation as any other that could be named. A man, especially of a speculative, reflecting cast of mind, may find his environment distasteful, his social surroundings perverse and discordant, his duties, however imperious, hateful and repulsive, and he may assume, with regard to each and all, an attitude of meditative hesitation and suspense which is, to all intents and purposes, skeptical.

2. The second point of connection between "Hamlet" and other skeptical dramas partakes more of the nature of a distinction. The chief personages of the other dramas are at war chiefly with doctrines and theories, with petrified traditions and opinions, in short, with dogmas and convictions, whereas in "Hamlet" the conflict, though not devoid of speculative aspects, is chiefly with practical duties, moral requisitions, pre-determined acts. The suspense or denial in the former refers mainly to the creed or assured belief of those who share it, the doubt in the latter case refers altogether to action. Nor does this change of *venue* with regard to the object destroy the common character of

the skepticism pertaining to it. On the contrary, no fact relating to humanity is more certain than that human action as well as human speculation may possess its examples of indecision and suspense, though for obvious reasons the practical skeptic will always be in a minority compared with his theorising brethren. There exists, in point of fact, between a dogma and an act a much closer affinity than is commonly supposed, especially when both one and the other represent the termination of a long and complex ratiocination, though this condition is by no means essential. A dogma is a definitive conviction, an act a definitive portion of human activity or energy, but the property of finality belongs to both, though not in equal proportions. To some thinkers a creed once formulated and confessed seems an eternal enunciation of truth, not to be modified or recalled. But this irretrievable character is still more forcibly impressed upon every decisive act. This has a specially dread, irrevocable quality of its own. Hence sensitive minds largely endowed with ratiocinative and imaginative powers are apt to shun important acts, more particularly when these are based upon complex many-sided considerations and when they entail consequences out of all proportion greater than the act itself.

3. Even when the considerations and circumstances surrounding an act are naturally of the simplest and most obvious kind, they may easily be rendered complicated and embarrassing by a subtle and profound intellect. Thus "Hamlet" shares that quality which in all the other cases establishes a *prima facie* basis for skepticism. He is, in other words, a victim of infinity, of thought and reflection so far enlarged that their sphere has become illimitable. He falls a prey first to his own genius for profound many-sided meditation, his subtilising and refining instincts, his invincible preference for the ideal and abstract as compared with the actual and concrete; and, secondly, to the varied considerations, the manifold difficulties and perplexities which he so readily detects in every object of thought and of action. Hamlet's universe¹—his own subjective mikrokosm—was

¹ Coleridge remarks of Hamlet's cowardice that it proceeded "merely from that aversion to action which prevails among such as have a world in themselves" (note on Coleridge's Lectures, *N. and Q.*, i., x., p. 119).

therefore just as full of uncertainties, antagonisms, unsolved and insoluble problems as the universe of Prometheus, of Job, and of Faust. To him every human motive and impulse, the scope and result of every separate act, all the accompaniments and relations of human conduct seem to present the appearance, not of simplicity, but of complexity. Oftentimes, no doubt, questions of practical duty, when closely investigated, are found to possess difficulties of their own which defy disentanglement or removal. But Hamlet's nature, like that of every genuine skeptic, is to create them when they do not naturally or necessarily exist. Aspects of duty which in themselves are simple and easy, manifest and imperious, he so elaborates and refines that their primary qualities are lost in a tangled web of casuistical and modifying considerations. Hamlet is, in fact, Shakespeare's matured and finished illustration of the truth expressed in "Love's Labour's Lost," and which may be taken as a definition of skepticism in practice :—

So study evermore is overshot ;
While it doth study to have what it would,
It doth forget to do the thing it should.

.

COMPARISON OF HAMLET WITH GOETHE'S FAUST.

But of the dramatic heroes of free-thought already considered, Faust is that which presents the greatest contrast to Hamlet. Both alike are products of the mental unrest, the many-sided speculation which were born of the Renaissance in Italy and France, and which grew with its growth : but they represent its activities as operating in divergent directions. Faust is the general skeptic, the unbeliever in intellectual and scientific truth, the unsatisfied inquirer into every department of human knowledge, and especially the searcher into the deep things of physical science. He is also the studious recluse for whom humanity and its concerns possess only a small amount of interest. Hamlet, on the other hand, though full of brooding on all things, divine and human, is especially the skeptic of humanity, the unbeliever in existence—not in its general sense of the universe, but in its narrower sense of mankind. He has little interest in science or

its numberless problems, nor in abstract speculation for its own sake, but he is profoundly interested in man and his mysteries. His universe is that which contains human lives and words and actions, and which is bounded by the dread limits of fate and the iron law of circumstance. Though somewhat inclined to solitude, as, indeed, every true thinker must always be, his destiny necessitates a continued intercourse with a busy world which, however, he contemplates with a mixture of skepticism and contempt. His unbelief is chiefly manifested, not as Faust's, in speculation, but in action. He reasons and meditates on the obligations of human duty and conduct until his power of performance is quite destroyed. It would, perhaps, be idle to ask why, among Shakespeare's manifold creations, he has left no example of complete speculative incertitude, such as we have in Goethe's "Faust," and which might have served as a pendant to "Hamlet," the practical skeptic in his dramatic picture-gallery. One conceivable reason may have been his intimacy with Marlowe and his reluctance to encroach on a theme which that writer had made his own. Another reason, doubtless, was that Shakespeare's interests in speculative learning and science were not so powerful and acute as Goethe's. He could never have lost himself as the great German did in the contemplation of theories and the solution of problems, of which the human utility, even if it could be said to exist, was only indirect and unimportant; nor could the insolubility of the great world-problems of science have impressed itself so forcibly on our great dramatist as on his German compeer. To Shakespeare there were quite enough incertitudes and impenetrable enigmas in his own chosen universe of humanity without seeking for more in the laws and phenomena of the material world. A third reason for his neglect of the Faust legend was his antipathy to a subject of which the supernatural elements possessed necessarily such a repulsive and anti-human aspect. All Shakespeare's creations, even when transcending the limits of nature and humanity, are yet intensely human and terrestrial. His nearest approach to a diabolical creation is Caliban. His ideal magician is not Faust in his gloomy, Gothic stone-roofed study, surrounded with the paraphernalia and implements of magic, but Prospero in his picturesque island cave; his magician's wand does not raise hellish

poodles and spirits, but lively pleasant sprites such as Ariel, or ultra-human fairies like Oberon and Titania. His witches are not the infernal obscene hags of Goethe's imagination, but only intensifications of human depravity and ugliness. Hence much of the machinery which constitutes an inseparable part of the Faust legend, for example, the blood-stained compact with the infernal powers, would, had it existed, have seemed an anomaly among purely Shakespearian creations. But the most cogent reason why Shakespeare did not appreciate the intellectual skeptic, of which Faust is the great impersonation, was his feeble interest in purely metaphysical and abstract thought, for its own sake.¹ He was too realistic, too closely wedded to mundane affairs, to the practical life of humanity, to pursue an ideal far beyond the confines of the senses and the intellect. And this not solely for the reason that he possessed an Englishman's characteristic contempt for mere speculation—for travelling on a road perhaps leading no-whither—but because he had himself explored the road until he had arrived at a point where further exploration seemed either impossible or useless. We must not, however, unduly restrict Shakespeare's metaphysical speculations. A man of his profound thought and vivid imagination must occasionally have made incursions or attempted surveys of that mysterious and fathomless unknown by which our mundane existence is metaphysically as well as physically environed. He undoubtedly paid repeated visits to the shore of the ocean of transcendental being, but he was indisposed to plunge into it at the risk of finding himself out of his own depth, or to sail on its surface beyond the reach of definite and well-ascertained landmarks. He penetrated to the visible horizon of the infinite, scaled some of the lower and more accessible summits of metaphysical speculation, threw a hasty plumb-line into the bottomless profundities of

¹ Shakespeare's opinion of the different branches of philosophy studied in his time is indicated in Tranio's advice to Lucentio in "The Taming of the Shrew". After enjoining Aristotle for philosophy, Ovid for poetry, common conversation for logic and rhetoric, and music for recreation, he proceeds:—

"The mathematics and the metaphysics
Fall to them as you find your stomach serves you,
No profit grows where is no pleasure ta'en".

mental science, but farther or deeper he did not care to penetrate. He had already ascertained the chiefest conditions and limitations of truth-search. He had pursued his quarry so far as to learn that the discovery of absolute truth was denied to human faculties, and that man, if he were wise, must needs content himself with the relative and the practical. He ascertained, moreover, that truth had an inherent splendour that dazzled the eyes of the observer, that thought and imagination were allied with and oftentimes induced an inappeasable discontent, that they took the form of an infinite scope and aspiration that nothing could satisfy, that truth-search was in its fullest measure connected with suffering. But with these speculative ascertainments Shakespeare was satisfied. He was too optimistic to sympathise with a career of voluntary suffering undertaken in pursuit of airy phantoms or undiscoverable truths; too intensely human to follow even the highest human aspiration beyond the limit and power of humanity; too impatient of mere ideality to bestow attention and sympathy on the endless torments in the cause of human progress of a Prometheus, the ceaseless strivings of a Faust to attain the infinite, or the efforts of any other skeptic in the pursuit of search for search's sake.

SHAKESPEARE'S PARTIALLY SKEPTICAL CHARACTERS—*E.G.*, TIMON.

How far the Shakespearian gallery must be deemed incomplete, by reason of its non-inclusion—in respect of a single finished homogeneous impersonation—of the purely speculative doubter, the persistent truth-seeker, is a question susceptible of more than one answer. For if it be true that Shakespeare has created no extreme skeptic it is also true, and the truth bears witness to his profound acquaintance with human nature, that he has many characters who approximate less or more to the complete indifference or suspense of pure skepticism, as well as a few forcible representations of antagonism to the ordinary convictions and usages of mankind. Of the latter Timon is the most striking instance. In the ordinary meaning of the term which refers it to denial and positive negation, Timon is a skeptic, especially a social skeptic—a passionate disbeliever in humanity. This phase of his

mental character assimilates him to Hamlet and Lear, but the misanthropy of Timon and Lear is the result of headlong, unreasoning passion, while the social skepticism of Hamlet, though not unfounded on experience, is accompanied by ratiocination and reflection. But Timon is more than a misanthropist or social skeptic. In his vehement negation he includes deity, providence, virtue, goodness. No skeptical juxtaposition of mutually destructive entities could be more comprehensively defined than the catalogue in Timon's mad invocation:—

Piety and fear,
Religion to the gods, peace, justice, truth,
Domestic awe, night-rest and neighbourhood,
Instruction, manners, mysteries and trades,
Degrees, observances, customs and laws
Decline to your confounding contraries,
And let confusion live!

On the other hand, Timon's skepticism is cherished in plain contradiction to his conviction, and hence is insincere. In a moment of candour he terms it "general and exceptless rashness," and says of himself:—

For I must ever doubt, though ne'er so sure.

Hence Timon is far from being a philosophical skeptic or even a profound thinker. His intellect is too unbalanced, his passions too impetuous, his temperament too weak and sensitive. He represents, with regard to humanity and social rights and duties, that unrestrained forwardness which in the region of speculative beliefs becomes dogmatic and bigoted. His denial is like the extreme nihilism of those who would not only destroy all ordinary faiths and objects of belief, but would enforce their destructive dogmas with persecution and intolerance.

.

SHAKESPEARE'S CONTEMPLATIVE, PHILOSOPHICAL AND HUMOROUS SKEPTICS.

But besides Shakespeare's representations of social or human skepticism he has a whole class of characters of a more generally skeptical or suspensive kind. He has a number of dramatic

creations whose common function is to moralise on the events and persons passing before them. These are outsiders who take up for themselves a position apart from the main stream of human life and action, whence they watch with sympathetic, or caustic, or humorous glance the curiously involved interplay of human motives, wills or passions. With the conscious superiority of on-lookers who are convinced they see most of the game of life, they institute a judicial and mostly inconclusive estimate of the human panorama before them. They thus exercise nearly the same office with regard to humanity and social phenomena in general, as a Greek chorus did with respect to the particular characters and events of its own drama, except that the judgment of the latter was apt to be more decisive.¹ Such a position, however, is essentially skeptical. He who adopts it assumes in the act that he is impartial, open to receive evidence from either side, and, therefore, is indifferent. He is one of those thinkers who were termed by the old Greeks "two-eyed" or "double-sighted" men. Nor can we be surprised if in the infinite complications of things mundane and human the outcome of their investigations is either totally suspensive or only partially decisive. Shakespeare has invested this contemplative moralist with such a variety of manifestations, forms and temperaments as sufficiently to show his own predilection for that philosophic type of intellect.² Thus he is sometimes humorous, as in the case of the first clown in the churchyard scene in "Hamlet": sometimes melancholic, as in the instance of Jaques; sometimes cynical, as

¹ The reader need hardly be reminded that Shakespeare has also imitated the functions of a Greek chorus in his "*Henry V.*".

² M. Phil. Charles has attempted a *rationale* of Shakespeare's moralising characters. He says: "Le Théâtre réalise donc et transforme en action la pensée secrète des peuples. Shakspeare lui-même offre l'idéal de l'observation, telle que la rêvait un peuple pratique et positif. Quand cette observation est fatiguée de son travail, elle se change en rêverie triste; il y a dans les drames Shakspeariens plus d'un personnage dont le seul emploi est de philosopher: tel le Jacques de *Comme il vous plaira*, et le vieil ermite de *Roméo et Juliette*. Leur voix, c'est la voix de Shakspeare, qui après avoir analysé curieusement les âmes humaines, l'inanité de nos désirs et la terrible fin de nos passions consumées par leur intensité, pousse un long et sublime gémissement" (*Etudes sur l'Espagne*, p. 25).

Biron in "Love's Labour's Lost"; sometimes humanely pious, as in the example of Friar Laurence; sometimes severely philosophical, as Hector in "Troilus and Cressida"; while in "Hamlet" we have combined with all these species of contemplative thought that further development of skeptical or suspensive philosophy which engenders an indisposition to action. But among these examples of dispassionate, contemplative thinkers we must especially note one as presenting us with Shakespeare's nearest approximation to a purely speculative skeptic—this is Biron in "Love's Labour's Lost". Indeed, the very plot of that play suggests the question how far truth can be discovered, because it is founded on the supposed withdrawal of the King of Navarre and three companion princes from the world for purposes of study; in other words, of knowledge-acquisition. It is set forth in these lines:—

Bir. What is the end of study? let me know.

King. Why, that to know, which else we should not know.

Bir. Things hid and barr'd, you mean, from common sense?

King. Ay, that is study's god-like recompense.

Of this philosophic scheme Biron is the mocking Mephistopheles, He reasons on the vanity of truth-search together with all other human delights, partly with the *Weltschmerz* of the Hebrew preacher, "Vanity of vanities, all is vanity"; partly with the profound apperception of a Greek skeptic.

Bir. Why, all delights are vain; but that most vain
Which, with pain purchased, doth inherit pain:
As, painfully to pore upon a book,
To seek the light of truth; while truth the while
Doth falsely blind the eyesight of his look:
Light, seeking light, doth light of light beguile:
So, ere you find where light in darkness lies,
Your light grows dark by losing of your eyes.

These lines are remarkable as a summary of skeptical argument—a felicitous rendering into poetry of the ancient and well-worn plea for the impossibility of truth-discovery. From a pessimistic standpoint, the last two lines might stand as an epitaph on the grave-stone of many a weary seeker for truth, and though the likeness of truth to the sun is as ancient as the first rudimentary speculations of humanity, the lines which follow indicate, if not the spirit of complete skepticism, at least the spirit of the inquirer

who has approached near enough to apprehend its lineaments and characteristics :—

Study (*i.e.*, truth) is like the heaven's glorious sun,
That will not be deep search'd with sauey looks ;
Small have continual plodders ever won,
Save base authority from others' books.

A sentiment which, besides being skeptical, very nearly resembles the argument of Mephistopheles in his well-known colloquy with the student. A further likeness to Goethe's creation is contained in Biron's skeptical estimate of language :—

These earthly god-fathers of heaven's lights,
That give a name to every fixed star,
Have no more profit of their shining nights,
Than those that walk, and wot not what they are.
Too much to know, is to know naught but fame ;
And every god-father can give a name.

Nor is Biron unaware of the consequences of pursuing "to its bitter end" this vein of skeptical thought. He knows that his plea is made on behalf of virtual nescience :—

Though I have for barbarism spoke more
Than for that angel knowledge you can say.

And, what is even more noteworthy still, he indicates the suicidal effect of uncompromising skepticism or truth-search based upon it. Sextos Empeirikos had compared the operation of skeptical suspense to a purgative which, cleansing the body, eliminated itself at the same time, and to fire which, while it devours the material it preys on, consumes itself in the process. Montaigne and other French free-thinkers reproduced the idea. Now, Shakespeare seems not only to have recognised the same truth, but to have employed the same imagery to express it. Biron thus continues his skeptical invective against knowledge :—

So study evermore is overshot ;
While it doth study to have what it would,
It doth forget to do the thing it should :
And when it hath the thing it hunteth most,
'Tis won, as towns with fire ; so won, so lost.

Were this the place for the inquiry it would be interesting to investigate the sources of Shakespeare's skeptical disquisitions contained in this play and scattered throughout his other dramas.

That he was well acquainted with the best products of the Renaissance free-thought, both in Italy and France, has often been proved, but his chief source—so far as such a versatile and powerful thinker needed any extraneous suggestion on any point whatsoever—was, in my opinion, Montaigne, of whose *Essais*, first published in 1580, he was demonstrably a diligent and appreciative student. At least the skepticism and genial cynicism of the great essayist are fairly represented by Biron in "Love's Labour's Lost," and are also reproduced in other Shakespearian creations.

SHAKESPEARE'S CONTEMPLATIVE SKEPTICISM.

More important for our subject—the skepticism of Hamlet—is the fact that the moralising contemplative indifferentism pertaining to so many of Shakespeare's characters was indisputably his own cherished standpoint. In the highest and noblest sense of the term, he was, as M. Phil. Charles and other critics have called him, a skeptic.¹ In other words, he was a judicial, equilibrating, suspensive thinker. His intellectual character was tolerant and critically dispassionate, his emotional sympathies were many-sided and comprehensive; in both, his position was indifference as opposed to dogmatism. He was another added to the many existing examples of the innate love of liberty, the combined versatility and profundity of feeling which are primary characteristics of every great thinker. This was indeed the secret of what Coleridge termed his myriad-mindedness, as well as of his intense humanity. He saw truth, reason, as well as the springs of human conduct, not solely from his own individual standpoint, but from the thousand-fold positions, and with the variously endowed visions and sympathies of their human possessors. There is, therefore, hardly any opinion—outside the limits of purely speculative metaphysics—of which the various sides, good, bad and indifferent, do not find expression in different portions of his works. Philosophy, theology, ethics, politics, science—in short, all subject matters of human concernment—are discussed by his characters, and that not in a perfunctory and superficial manner,

¹ "Il y a dans Shakspeare non pas un scepticisme systématique, mais une absence de parti pris sur toutes choses" (*Etudes sur l'Espagne*, p. 75).

but generally with the clearness and profundity of original thinkers. All conceivable types of humanity Shakespeare has vivisected and described, and has well-nigh exhausted the attributes of each. He is especially conversant with the manifold correlation of human thought to human conduct—the subject of “Hamlet”. He has investigated with equal subtlety and insight the structure of the mind, regarded, not so much as an abstractive intellectual faculty, as the power which originates and excogitates action. He is profoundly versed in human motives, their manifold kinds, their infinitely varied powers—each with its own nature and degree, or with its chameleon capacity for endless mutations of colouring and modes of presentation. He investigates them from the standpoints of those who share and those who observe them, and notes the subtle disguises and rapid transformations in respect of each. Moreover, he is profoundly versed in the deep-sea soundings of human passions, he has investigated them in calm and in storm. He has surveyed them at all times and in all seasons, he has considered them in every relation, both of themselves and of their surroundings. He has piloted his way through their labyrinthine intricacies again and again, he has marked and, so to speak, “charted” their changeful depths, until there is no direction or attribute pertaining to them of which he is not cognisant. But with all this wide reach of positive knowledge, both general and human, there is no dogmatism, no stress on particular creeds as exhausting the sum total of speculative truth, no attempt at systematisation, no endeavour to fix a string of beliefs or to prescribe a course of action as suitable to every man and every contingency. He is too well acquainted with the intricate perplexity pertaining to all mundane things to attempt any such segregation. He moralises in a genial, sympathetic mood on these infinite complications. In short, his method is flexible, varied and many-sided, and his standpoint equilibrating and skeptical. Given the universe and humanity, the highest objects of contemplation, as his life task, instead of some specific practical duty, and Shakespeare himself is Hamlet. He revolves in his mind’s eye the shifting aspects of things just as persistently as Hamlet views on every side the attendant circumstances of his prescribed duty, and the general outcome of his consideration is no more marked by speculative definiteness than is Hamlet’s rumina-

tion by practical resolution. This is the reason why Shakespeare has been claimed by so many sectaries and dogmatists, philosophical and religious, why all kinds of special studies and decisive beliefs have been ascribed to him. Few of the world's great thinkers have paid more fully for the eclecticism, the philosophical indifference, the attitude of pure inquiry which most of them share alike, than our great English dramatist. Happily the very attempt to charge him with antagonistic creeds and conflicting opinions is itself sufficient to demonstrate its falsity. In his magnificent totality Shakespeare is infinitely greater than any system, code, or methodical series of prescriptions of any kind, whether speculative or regulative, religious or moral.

Nor is this all that can be said of the moralising, contemplative, and so far skeptical character of Shakespeare, for, as has often been pointed out, we have a distinctly traceable advance in his works, from immature decisiveness to well-balanced contemplation, from single to multiform aspects of existence, from simple to composite estimates of thought and action, from *prima facie* and ordinary conceptions of the universe to others more recondite and philosophical—in a word, from dogmatism to indeterminate suspense. Any thoughtful reader who peruses his works in their chronological order, so far as this can be fairly determined, will have no difficulty in ascertaining this fact for himself. He will find that all the dramas that belong to the mature period of Shakespeare's productiveness are permeated by what Hallam termed his "thoughtful philosophy".¹ They are marked by that cautious moralising, that persistent equilibration, that dispassionate insight into and genial appreciation of diverse aspects of truth, which is, in the worthiest sense of the term, skeptical.

A striking illustration of the philosophic growth of Shakespeare's mind is supplied us by the different recensions and editions of the very drama we are now considering. The best Shakespearian critics seem now agreed that the first quarto of 1603 contains the earliest form of the play indited by Shakespeare himself; and that this was probably written some years before, possibly about 1585-7.² The text, as we now have it, is first

¹ *History of Literature*, vol. ii., pp. 181-185.

² Compare on this point (and every other relating to "Hamlet") Furness's admirable Variorum edition, vol. ii., p. 19.

contained in the second quarto, 1604, so that even allowing that the latter may have been in existence, as some critics contend, in 1600, we have still some years left of Shakespeare's intellectual prime, during which the theme of "Hamlet," and its final mature form, as we possess it, were being slowly elaborated in the "apprehensive, quick projective" intellect of its author. The main differences between the two texts may be thus succinctly summarised. The first quarto contains all the *action* and most of the pure poetry of the drama, the second superadds the cautious balancing philosophy which forms the most striking and admirable characteristic of the play as we know it. It reveals an increase of introspective power on the part of Hamlet, a progress in subtle, refined analysis, an advance in equilibration, both intellectual and emotional, a more pronounced skeptical distrust of himself and all his surroundings, an enlarged scope of misanthropic feeling.¹ It cannot be a rash inference from these facts—which might be easily paralleled from a comparison of earlier and later states of his other works—that Shakespeare's intellectual development consisted largely of a growing respect for multifarious ratiocination, of a profounder insight into the mysteries of human nature and the complicated relations of motives to actions, of a fuller appreciation of speculative philosophy on all subjects that admitted it. As to the practical skepticism of "Hamlet," we may infer from the loving elaboration he expended on the character, just as Goethe did on his "Faust," and especially on those influences that originated and intensified its skepticism, that Shakespeare must have arrived at the conclusion that there were conceivable contingencies in which a practical *epoché*—a suspense of action between opposing balancements of pros and cons—was, if not commendable, at least pardonable. He must have come to the conviction that in the complications of human existence there were occasions in which the pronouncement of energy we call action was as difficult as, in matters of abstruse and many-sided speculation, the decisive affirmation we term a creed.

¹ See by all means Furness's remarkable list of the passages—all of them pertaining to Shakespeare's "thoughtful philosophy"—which are found in the "Hamlet" of 1604, but which do not exist in the earlier form of the drama ("Hamlet," vol. ii., p. 18).

SHAKESPEARE AS A COMMENTATOR ON SKEPTICS:
FACULTIES OF DOUBT; NATURE, THE UNIVERSE
(PHYSICAL).

Passing now from Shakespeare's moralising characters—including also himself as altogether sympathising with such an idiosyncrasy—we next note his general description of and comment on various kinds of skeptical personages and attributes, reserving for the present the special skepticism in conduct which he has illustrated in "Hamlet".

1. That Shakespeare was fully convinced of the general advantages of knowledge over ignorance is a truth needing no demonstration; it is impressed on every page of his works. Biron in "Love's Labour's Lost," even while declaiming against it and urging the vanity of its pursuit, still terms it "the angel knowledge". Ignorance, on the contrary, is a monster, and "barbarous," "dark," "barren," "unweighing," etc. Shakespeare juxtaposits them in the well-known passage:—

Ignorance is the curse of God,
Knowledge the wing wherewith we fly to heaven.

He glorifies the knowledge-faculty, reason, with his usual copious phraseology and superabundant metaphor. The sovereignty of reason was the supremest power in the makrokosm of the universe as well as in the mikrokosm of man. The discourse of reason was the supremest faculty of man—that which discerned him from beasts; but he also recognised the truth that human reason was purely a judicial faculty, that its functions were to weigh, winnow and test before decisively asserting, and hence that its judgments were negative as well as affirmative. Not that Shakespeare, as we have already observed, seems to have paid much attention to the purely speculative domain of man's reason, or to the various phases, causes and conditions of knowledge-inquiry for its own sake, nor had he investigated much the relation of doubt to pure speculation. Both reason and doubt are interesting to him solely from their relation to human conduct and action. This is the sense in which he juxtaposits the respective attributes of dogmatism and skepticism in the passage:—

The wound of peace is surety,
 Surety secure; but modest doubt is call'd
 The beacon of the wise, the tent that searches
 To the bottom of the worst.

But while Shakespeare, as we shall see more fully further on, places a high value on the deliberative suspensive attributes of reason, he also castigates unnecessary suspense, and in the very act shows that he is fully aware of the characteristic methods of skepticism. Thus we have Parolles resolving:—

I'll about it this evening, and I will presently pen down my dilemmas, encourage myself in my certainty, put myself into my mortal preparation, and by midnight look to hear further from me ("All's Well that ends Well").

But Shakespeare's favourite mode of contemplating incertitude was not to consider it by itself or on its own merits, nor even to regard it in relation to certitude. He rather permits its character and attributes to appear of their own accord by collocating the antitheticals that originate them. Surveying the universe with his double vision he everywhere discerns contradictions and antipathies. That nature is made up of such dissonances is a conclusion common to the bitter misanthropy of Timon and to the genial Christianity of Friar Laurence. The former, addressing nature, calls her—

Common mother thou,
 Whose womb unmeasurable and infinite breast
 Teems, and feeds all; whose self-same mettle,
 Whereof thy proud child, arrogant man, is puff'd,
 Engenders the black toad and adder blue,
 The gilded newt and eyeless venom'd worm,
 With all the abhorred births below crisp heaven
 Whereon Hyperion's quickening fire doth shine.

While the latter, regarding nature from an opposite standpoint, says:—

The earth, that's nature's mother, is her tomb;
 What is her burying grave, that is her womb:
 And from her womb children of divers kind
 We sucking on her natural bosom find;
 Many for many virtues excellent,
 None but for some, and yet all different.

But Shakespeare also recognises that it is from these mutual oppositions, these endless discords that the manifold utterance, the magnificent harmony of nature is derived.

I this infer,
That many things having full reference
To one consent may work contrariously,
As many arrows loosed several ways
Come to one mark, etc.

Moreover, the universe at large seems to have presented to Shakespeare the general aspect of multiplex, ever-varying phenomena of which the real causes, origin and destiny were hid in impenetrable mystery. This fact necessarily imposed a limit to man's unquiet investigations, as well as to the possibility of attaining any large measure of knowledge by their instrumentality. The direction in which it pointed was clearly acquiescent nescience, and, accordingly, Shakespeare takes occasion to dwell upon this phase of existence. Thus he speaks of "mysteries which heaven will not have earth to know"; and makes Lear, in his ironical determination to rival the vaunted omniscience of Courtiers, propose to Cordelia.

And take upon's the mystery of things,
As if we were God's spies.

In a similar mood he expresses his impatience of those philosophers who claim to explicate all the marvels of the universe: "They say miracles are past; and we have our philosophical persons to make modern and familiar things supernatural and causeless. Hence is it that we make trifles of terrors, ensconcing ourselves into seeming knowledge when we should submit ourselves to an unknown fear." This "seeming knowledge" of nature he also castigates in the reply of the soothsayer to Charmian; when the latter asks him, "Is't you, sir, that know things?" the genuine soothsayer answers, "In nature's infinite book of secrecy *a little I can read*".

Elsewhere, he speaks of the unsatisfying nature of research into the profundities, "eternities" and "divine silences" by which human existence is environed. Whether Shakespeare pursued this latter vein of moody reflection to the pessimistic extreme with which some Continental critics have charged him, seems to us questionable, as does also the ascribing to him the passionate misanthropy and *Weltschmerz* of Timon—the instance on which this opinion is mostly based. Perhaps the more measured and philosophic reflection of "Hamlet" and his opinion as to the dis-

crepancy between being and seeming may, with some grounds of probability, be attributed to him—but this will meet us further on, when we come to consider the nature of Hamlet's philosophy.

SKEPTICISM IN THE HUMAN UNIVERSE.

2. It is, however, in humanity—Shakespeare's real universe—that he chiefly perceives divergencies and antagonisms of every kind and degree. These he delights in placing in every conceivable relation of mutual contradiction. Sextos Empeirikos defined skepticism as the antithesis in every possible manner of phenomena and noumena; similarly, Shakespeare's favourite conception of humanity might be defined as a centre-point of contradictions—a seething mass of conflicting opinions, instincts, feelings and attributes. Nothing, in his judgment, was more self-opposed or mutually antithetical than the qualities pertaining to human nature, while beneath its apparent truth was discernible the real vanity of human existence. It were needless to quote the different passages—among the best known of all Shakespearian excerpts—in which he maintains in various strains of pathos and picturesque beauty, "We are such stuff" as dreams are made of, and our little life is rounded with a sleep," or with imagery more than once employed by him for the same purpose:—

Life's but a walking shadow, a poor player
That struts and frets his hour upon the stage,
And then is heard no more: it is a tale
Told by an idiot, full of sound and fury,
Signifying nothing.

The dissonances in human nature so far harmonise with the vain fugitive character of human existence, that both assert the fallible fluctuating quality of whatever pertains to man. Thus there is a perpetual conflict between the will and the reason, between reason and imagination, between the will and the act, or between theory and practice, between "rude will" and grace, between temptation and conscience, between desire and fruition, etc., etc. The recognition of these varying antagonisms does not, however, prevent Shakespeare's high estimate of the noblest faculties of mankind when wisely and cautiously exercised. Of his general opinion of the human reason we have already spoken and shall have another opportunity of considering it when we

come to speak of Hamlet's philosophy. The creative power of imagination he also admires, without forgetting its aptitude for feigning unreal and fantastic entities, and so far its natural antagonism to truth and actuality. The power which gives to "airy nothing a local habitation and a name" is of doubtful utility to the explorer in the realm of reality and phenomena, whose sole conception of truth is that which is determined by the senses. The antagonism which hence results between the deliverances of the imagination and the reason Shakespeare thus defines :—

Lovers and madmen have such seething brains,
Such shaping fantasies, that apprehend
More than cool reason ever comprehends.
The lunatic, the lover and the poet
Are of imagination all compact.

In connection with this creative and well-nigh omnipotent force of imagination is the wonderful swiftness and unlimited scope of thought. When Shakespeare speaks of the "infinite of thought," he enunciates a principle which has ever been a most prolific cause of skepticism, and it is clear by his various methods of expressing it that this supremest property of thought was one of the chief lessons he had derived from his own profound and perpetual introspection. Of skeptical implication also are Shakespeare's carefully guarded expressions as to human wisdom; for example, he puts into the mouth of Touchstone the old Sokratic definition of wisdom and folly—"The fool doth think he is wise, but the wise man knows himself to be a fool"—with which we shall presently have to compare Hamlet's profession of ignorance, as well as Shakespeare's general mode of considering the aims and objects of man's intellectual faculties.

Another peculiar function of humanity which thinkers in all ages have made a primary cause of skepticism is language and its relation to the highest faculties, as, for example, reason, imagination, etc. Few readers of Shakespeare, unless they have compared his different utterances on the point, are aware how skeptical this greatest of English word-artists was in the instruments of his craft, how fully conscious of the gulf that existed between "the name and the thing," or between truth and its only mode of expression. The hackneyed quotation.

What's in a name ? that which we call a rose
By any other name would smell as sweet—

is a poetic predication of nominalism, and capable, as every thinker knows, of very far-reaching implications. What makes the universal stress on words more mischievous to the cause of truth is the facility with which they are imposed, as Biron, in "Love's Labour's Lost," remarks :—

And every god-father can give a name ;

words, like unverified knowledge from the mental garniture of fools :—

The fool hath planted in his memory
An army of good words, and I do know
A many fools that stand in better place,
Garnished like him, that for a tricky word
Defy the matter.

Words have, moreover, an unlimited capacity of transformation—"a sentence is but a cheveril glove to a good wit, how quickly the wrong side may be turned outward". To the same purpose speaks Brabantio in "Othello" :—

These sentences to sugar or to gall,
Being strong on both sides are equivocal ;
But words are words, I never yet did hear
That the bruised heart was pierced through the ear.

But it would take us too long to recount all the instances of Shakespeare's distrust of words. As a general result we may remark that he is careful to discriminate between name and thing, between word and act, between profession and reality. Like the ancient philosophers he makes verbosity a characteristic of fools, and takes silence as a proof of supreme wisdom. He puts in the mouth of Lear's clown a re-echo of Abelard's skeptical advice to his son to be more eager to learn than to teach :—

Speak less than thou knowest,
Learn more than thou trowest.

It may also be added that this musing on the skeptical duplicity and consequent untrustworthiness of words, is so much more marked in his later than in his earlier works, that we may take it as an attendant upon the progress of his "Thoughtful Philosophy".

Nor is it only in human speculation, with its processes and instruments, that Shakespeare discerns room for doubt. The laws and principles of human action are also affected by incertitude, the distinctions of virtue and vice being rather relative than absolute. So Friar Laurence tells us:—

For nought so vile that on the earth doth live,
But to the earth some special good doth give;
Nor aught so good, but, strain'd from that fair use,
Revolts from true birth, stumbling on abuse:
Virtue itself turns vice, being misapplied;
And vice sometime's by action dignified.

With which we may compare the Bishop of Ely's mode of accounting for the good qualities of Henry V., notwithstanding his wild youth:—

The strawberry grows underneath the nettle;
And wholesome berries thrive and ripen best
Neighbour'd by fruit of baser quality:
And so the prince obscured his contemplation
Under the veil of wildness; which, no doubt,
Grew like the summer grass, fastest by night,
Unseen, yet crecive in his faculty.

Still more decisively affirming the relativity of ethical prescriptions is Hamlet's avowal: "There is nothing good or bad, but thinking makes it so". One result of this inter-complication of virtue and vice is that they cannot be definitely separated. How fully and beautifully this truth is exemplified in the greater number of Shakespeare's creations is well known. Although his reflection on the point is put into the mouth of one of the basest of his characters, yet its truth is so self-evident as not to admit of question:—

In the corrupted currents of this world,
Offence's gilded hand may shove by justice;
And oft 'tis seen the wicked prize itself
Buys out the law.

And the guilty king goes on to contrast this terrestrial confusion with the infallible discrimination of Heaven:—

But 'tis not so above;
There is no shuffling,—there the action lies
In his true nature.

SKEPTICISM IN HUMAN DESIRES AND EFFORTS.

3. But if man, his powers and activities, are thus involved in error, so also are the ordinary objects of human desire and effort, *e.g.*, truth, knowledge, opinion, authority, friendship, love, fame, reputation, honour, fortune. Not that Shakespeare is ignorant that these and similar entities have their honourable, true and praiseworthy aspects, but that with his double-sighted idiosyncrasy he must needs turn the medal and carefully scrutinise its obverse. Truth, for example, when supreme is as unattainable to man and as blinding to his vision as the sun. There is a perpetual contradiction between truth and semblance, between phenomena and the invisible reality underlying them. This conception comes out with singular force and vividness, as we shall presently have an opportunity of remarking, in Hamlet's own representation of the world, and some critics have thought that this antagonism of being and seeming constitutes the fundamental idea of most of Shakespeare's plays. At any rate he is fully cognisant that truth, whether of men or of opinions, is unreliable; that falsehood oftentimes assumes the lineaments and garb of truth, and conversely that truth is frequently vitiated by adulteration with falsehood. He also recognises the fact that truth and honesty are hated, while falsity and flattery are regarded with favour. Of knowledge, we have already noticed that Shakespeare has apprehended both the merits and disadvantages. To its correlative opinion he assigns the criticism and disdainful estimate of Montaigne: "A plague of opinion, a man may wear it on both sides like a leather jerkin". It is a judge whose decisions are based upon partial data:—

Opinion's but a fool that makes us scan
The outward habit *for* the inward man.¹

¹ An emendation of the ordinary text in this place is absolutely necessary, as the proverb of Simonides, which Shakespeare here quotes, implies the exact reverse of what it is made to express. A writer in *Notes and Queries* mentions an emendation that has been suggested:—

"The inward habit by the outward man".

Perhaps, however, the same meaning might be attained by substituting *for* for *by* in the received reading. Compare *Notes and Queries*, Series 3, vol. viii., p. 42.

It is the semblance of wisdom embodied in opinion which deceives the unthinking herd. It constitutes the dogmatism that infects and vitiates learning. Nor is Shakespeare more favourable to authority when unfounded upon valid reasons, and uninvested by trustworthy sanctions. The unverified authority we derive from books Biron stigmatises as *base*, while in certain mental states it appears to exercise a twofold and so far self-contradictory jurisdiction. Thus Troilus describes his divided feelings on the discovery of Cressida's perfidy as bi-fold authority, the equipoising faculty of reason being for the time employed not in adjusting but opposing each to each the rival balances:—

O madness of discourse
That cause sets up with and against itself.

Hamlet, as we shall see, is an illustrious victim of such a dual authority. Moreover, the well-known terms in which Shakespeare describes "Man, proud man, dressed in a little brief authority," are noteworthy for the indication (mostly overlooked) of self-ignorance that so often attends such a position. Such a man is—

Most ignorant of what he's most assured—
His glassy essence.

He has also seen that some necessity of self-illusion pertains to the exercise of authority:—

Authority, though it err like others,
Hath yet a kind of medicine in itself
That skims the vice o' the top—

a remark which is as true of authority in opinions, *i.e.* dogmatism as in its exercise towards human subordinates. It is needless to collect the almost countless proofs that Shakespeare has carefully examined both sides of the medal in the common objects of human ambition. The song of Amiens in "As You Like It":—

Most friendship is feigning,
Most loving mere folly;

the proverb of Orleans in "Henry V.," "there is flattery in friendship"; Jaques's ridicule of the "bauble reputation," sought at the cannon's mouth; Hamlet's description of Fortinbras's object of "divine ambition" as "an egg-shell"; Falstaff's catechism as to the impotence of "honour"; the frequent invectives against

Fortune and her worshippers ; the disdain of power and popularity contained in such extracts as these :—

What is pomp, rule, reign, but earth and dust?
And live we how we can, yet die we must.

An habitation giddy and unsure
Hath he that buildeth on the vulgar heart—

with other passages of the same kind—all testify to the existence in Shakespeare of a large amount of what may be termed social skepticism, even omitting altogether such representatives of the sentiment as we find in *Timon*, *Lear*, and *Hamlet*. It is the number and occasional vigour of these passages that give whatever force they have to the opinion of those critics who have painfully extracted from Shakespeare's writings some such misanthropic and life-hating personality as that of *Timon*. With every allowance for the strength of the arguments adduced to support that opinion, it seems to me radically one-sided. What the passages above quoted, together with others of the same kind, really serve to prove is not Shakespeare's extreme pessimism, but his habit of mental equilibration, his eclecticism, his appreciation and employment of diverse and alien standpoints for the contemplation of every truth ; in a word, his philosophical indifference, and so far his skepticism.

SHAKESPEARE ON FRUITION.

4. We next come to consider a special feature pertaining to the highest reaches of Shakespeare's speculation, which serves to confirm still more forcibly the reasons here offered that the general bent of his intellect was skeptical. I mean his strongly marked distrust of the merits of attainment or fruition as contrasted with their precedent states of aspiration or endeavour. We have already noticed his remark on the suicidal nature of truth attainment. He extends the same ultimate fatality to other objects of human quest. If truth when won is like a besieged town destroyed by fire in the moment of victory, the same fate befalls the triumph of human passion. In the words of Friar Laurence—

These violent delights have violent ends,
And in their triumph die like fire and powder,
Which as they kiss consume. The sweetest honey
Is loathsome in its own deliciousness,
And in the taste confounds the appetite.

Nor is this only the consummation of love, it is the outcome of human ambition. The toil of war is characterised as—

A pain that only seems to seek out danger
I' the name of fame and honour which dies i' the search.

The same sequel attends on general appetite when moderation or degree is lacking. Ulysses thus speculates on such a contingency:—

Then everything includes itself in power,
Power into will, will into appetite,
And appetite an universal wolf,
So doubly seconded with will and power,
Must make perforce an universal prey,
And last eat up himself.

This conclusion may even follow the pursuit of goodness, though the sentiment is put in the mouth of Hamlet's uncle:—

For goodness, growing to a pleurisy,
Dies in his own too-much.

The real reason of this incongruity between human desire and achievement, between hope and its realisation, is the conception that gave birth to the Eros of the Greeks. The passion or yearning stimulated by imagination far transcends the bounds of human possibility:—

The ample proposition that hope makes
In all designs begun on earth below,
Fails in the promised largeness.

And again:—

This is the monstrosity in love, that the will is infinite and the execution confined, that the desire is boundless and the act a slave to limit.

But the passage above all others which embodies Shakespeare's opinion of the unsatisfying nature of fruition is doubtless his 129th Sonnet, where he describes "lust in action":—

Enjoy'd no sooner, but despisèd straight;
 Past reason hunted; and no sooner had,
 Past reason hated, as a swallow'd bait,
 On purpose laid to make the taker mad:
 Mad in pursuit, and in possession so;
 Had, having, and in quest to have, extreme;
 A bliss in proof,—and proved, a very woe;
 Before, a joy proposed; behind, a dream.
 All this the world well knows; yet none knows well
 To shun the heaven that leads men to this hell.

That Shakespeare had obtained some knowledge of the best means of shunning a heaven that might prove only a portal to hell is shown by his occasional intimations that search is preferable to attainment, desire to fruition, as well as by his frequent deprecation of over-much retrospect, as, for example, Mark Antony's—

. . . On:—

Things that are past are done with me.

Or Troilus:—

Reason and respect (*i.e.* retrospect)

Make livers pale and lustihood deject.

Or Cressida's well-known saying:—

Things won are done, joy's soul lies in the doing.

It is needless to point out the skeptical tendency of this estimate of fruition. The preference of search for attainment has been one distinguishing mark of the most illustrious skeptics in the world's history. Shakespeare's opinion on the point is, moreover, an indispensable preliminary to the consideration of Hamlet, for he also represents, as we shall shortly see, the fascination for certain minds of speculation in comparison with action, of a many-sided search that will never by its own consent result in a definite find.

The preceding summary will suffice to give in the scattered piecemeal form in which any Shakespearian generalisation is alone possible the intimations of philosophical skepticism or indifference found in Shakespeare's works. They serve to show that his creation of Hamlet—the skeptic of practice—was not undertaken without a very intimate insight into the modes of thought that characterise skeptics in general. Few, indeed, are the speculations pertaining to skepticism that may not in some form be found in his writings.

"HAMLET" IN RELATION TO SHAKESPEARE'S
OTHER WORKS.

5. We pass on now from the general subject to consider the frequent indications of Hamletic or practical skepticism which are found in Shakespeare's other works. They clearly prove that the idea of Hamlet as a man whose power of action was paralysed by overmuch reflection had often been the subject of Shakespeare's contemplation. Nothing, indeed, is more admirable in Shakespeare's treatment of human nature than his subtle admixture of the constituent qualities that go to the formation of an individual character. For example, the faculty or aptitude that constitutes the chief personality of Hamlet is found in fragmentary portions, or in somewhat different forms and conditions in many other Shakespearian creations whose general intellectual temperament is totally unlike that of Hamlet.

For this reason it must be deemed a matter of regret that among the many commentators on Shakespeare's masterpiece none should have thought of elucidating its meaning from his other works. Possibly, in the case of a thinker at once so full and many-sided, the principle of *always* making him his own interpreter might be employed with advantage. Had this method been adopted in the case before us, the world would never have heard of not a few of the absurd theories and questions which have been mooted concerning Hamlet, as, for example: "Whether his insanity is real or feigned". Shakespearian critics would long ago have seen that what he intended by his creation of Hamlet was not an inhuman monstrosity—an uniquely eccentric product of human nature—but merely the excessive development of a faculty found in most men who have a right to the ennobling designation of *thinkers*. This is at once seen when we examine the remaining works of Shakespeare for indications of distinctively Hamletic qualities. Thus we find more than once the union of keen thought with slow, cautious or imperfect volition—a psychological analogue to the weakening of some physical power which comes from the redundant vigour or vitality of another—for example, the description of Longaville in "Love's Labour's Lost":—

A sharp wit matchéd with too blunt a will.

This dilatoriness of the will is often an affection of great minds, and is employed by them occasionally to oppose acknowledged obligations. Such a contingency is marked in the following words:—

. . . If this law
Of nature be corrupted through affection
And that great minds, of *partial indulgence*
To their benumb'd wills, resist the same.

The want of harmony or co-equal power between desire and act is thus described:—

Art thou afraid
To be the same in thine own act and valour
As thou art in desire?
Letting "I dare not" wait upon "I would,"
Like the poor cat i' the adage.

The general effect of doubt upon action is indicated in the well-known quotation:—

Our doubts are traitors,
And make us lose the good we oft might win,
By fearing to attempt.

We have also marked the persistent vitality of doubt—a property which Montaigne compared to the Hydra's head:—

For he hath found to end one doubt by death
Revives two greater in the heirs of life.

The relation of overmuch contemplation to action is marked in the two excerpts from "Love's Labour's Lost" and "Macbeth":—

While it doth study to have what it would
It doth forget to do the thing it should.

Thoughts speculative their unseen hopes relate,
But certain issue strokes must arbitrate.

Similarly we have this account of the tardiness in act which comes from a too persistent contemplation of it from every side; such a wistful regard being, however, caused not by dislike but by admiration:—

If you but knew how you the purpose cherish
Whiles thus you mock it! How in stripping it
You more invest it! Ebbing men, indeed,
Most often do so near the bottom run,
By their own fear or sloth.

Another kind of tardiness is that which dissembles or suppresses the manifestation of what is still a settled purpose. How completely Hamletic this is need not be pointed out:—

A tardiness in nature
Which often leaves the history unspoke
That it intends to do.

The ordinary reluctance to act, which comes from equilibration when the opposing poles are nearly balanced, is described by Hamlet's uncle:—

And, like a man to double business bound,
I stand in pause where I shall first begin,
And both neglect.

Nothing is more certain, with regard to "Hamlet," than the high estimation in which Shakespeare regarded this, the most masterly of all his creations. This is sufficiently proved by his careful and gradual elaboration of the character. He clearly shared Ophelia's admiration of his "noble mind," notwithstanding its infirmity of procrastination in action. Now it is remarkable that Shakespeare has clearly indicated elsewhere his opinion that this weakness is, as Milton designated ambition, a natural "infirmity of noble minds". He is well aware that much ratiocination is, with all its drawbacks, an outcome of much reason or intellect, that a distaste to action is the inevitable product of great speculative power. Some of the noblest characters of Shakespeare share the characteristic. This is how Camillo in "The Winter's Tale" excuses himself from the reproach of such cowardice:—

If ever fearful
To do a thing when I the issue doubted,
Whereof the execution did cry out
Against the non-performance, 'twas a fear
Which oft infects the wisest.

The same characteristic pertains to Brutus and Casca in "Julius Cæsar," to Ulysses and Hector in "Troilus and Cressida". Of Casca we are told:—

Brutus. He was quick mettle when he went to school.
Cassius. So is he now in execution
Of any bold or noble enterprise,
However he puts on this tardy form.

Speculation and contrivance in war, as distinct from action, are thus commended by Ulysses:—

They tax our policy, and call it cowardice;
 Count wisdom as no member of the war;
 Forestall prescience, and esteem no act
 But that of hand: the still and mental parts,—
 That do contrive how many hands shall strike,
 When fitness calls them on; and know, by measure
 Of their observant toil, the enemies' weight,—
 Why, this hath not a finger's dignity.

But, just as great minds are especially given to speculation, so also is it true that acts invite and justify speculation in proportion to their greatness:—

Checks and disasters
 Grow in the veins of actions highest reared,
 As knots by the conflux of meeting sap
 Infect the sound pine and divert his grain,
 Tortive and errant from his course of growth.

In this connection of speculation with action must also be mentioned Shakespeare's recognition of the finality that necessarily belongs to action:—

To promise is most courtly and fashionable, performance is a kind of will or testament which argues a great sickness in his judgment that makes it.

But perhaps the most remarkable of these similarities to Hamlet, and that which bears most particularly on his feigned insanity, is the passage in which Brutus describes the internal commotion induced by the conflict of will and act:—

Since Cassius first did whet me against Cæsar,
 I have not slept.
 Between the acting of a dreadful thing
 And the first motion, all the interim is
 Like a phantasma, or a hideous dream:
 The genius and the mortal instruments
 Are there in council; and the state of man,
 Like to a little kingdom, suffers then
 The nature of an insurrection—

a passage which might almost be taken as a summary of the plot of "Hamlet". Not less significant is Brutus's apology for his seeming suspicion of mankind, and his neglect of his friends:—

Nor construe any further my neglect,
Than that poor Brutus, with himself at war,
Forgets the shows of love to other men.

Brutus is indeed the character of all those sketched by Shakespeare's master-hand that most resembles Hamlet, and the many coincidences existing between them are rendered more interesting by the probability that "Hamlet" in its final form is nearly contemporaneous with "Julius Cæsar".

We have then in these quotations, which might be easily increased, remarkable indications of Shakespeare's profound study of practical skepticism—the theme elaborated in "Hamlet". There is indeed no feature or attribute fairly assignable to the Prince of Denmark which is not mentioned in these extracts. Hence they may be regarded in the light of preliminary sketches or studies, or else reproductions in miniature of Shakespeare's chief work. They are besides of especial import as showing that Hamlet's peculiarities are only eccentric in this respect, that the weaknesses and strangenesses of many ordinary men are concentrated in a single personality.

"HAMLET" AS A DRAMA OF SKEPTICAL FREE-THOUGHT.

Turning now to the play, we find that the indisposition to action which is Hamlet's main characteristic is represented as an incidental outcome of his general intellectual idiosyncrasy. Under any circumstances Hamlet must needs have been a thinker and a philosopher. He must have regarded the world, humanity and himself as interesting objects of speculation, and would have been rather attracted than deterred by the fact of their being insoluble. The primary requisite of men of this stamp is food for thought and reflection. They desire antitheses and antagonisms, which they can posit in a ceaseless series of equiposes and balancements. They want material for meditation of such a nature as to be inexhaustible. They prefer deliberation to decision, contrivance and policy to action, and indefinite search to discovery. Shakespeare's sympathy with men of this type we have already noticed, though it is probable that of the two he himself preferred the man of action to the man of speculation.

That this was Hamlet's character is shown by almost every thought and incident of his life. It is true that we only meet with Hamlet after the great events that formed the turning point in his career had taken place. What Hamlet was before the death of his father we only know partially. He speaks of a change in his life whereby he had lost all his mirth and foregone all custom of exercises, and his uncle also bears witness to what he terms his transformation. Some insight into his temper and conduct during the earlier and unsaddened part of his life would have been interesting. When he was as yet a student at Wittenberg, when at home in Elsinore he enjoyed the society of his beloved father, or snatched stolen moments of rapture in the company of his adored Ophelia, when he indulged in the student's thoughtful contemplation of "saws of books," and stored up other "forms and pressures" dedicated by "youth and observation"—

Within the book and volume of his brain.

But whatever else may be doubtful of this happier period, we may be certain of this: Hamlet must then have manifested in some degree the intellectual propensities which became so developed in after life. He must then have indulged in his brooding introspective habits, must have cherished his dreamy imagination, and must have formed an indifferent or skeptical estimate of much that the world around him had agreed to honour.¹ Thus the great calamities that befell him in such rapid and Job-like succession, served only to intensify and develop already existing tendencies. The sudden and mysterious death of his father, the succession of his hated uncle to the throne of Denmark, and worse than all, the hasty marriage of his uncle and his mother were matters of grave and sombre reflection to one whose instinctive disposition was to reflect profoundly on everything. They were so many imperative and personal problems added to what he had not improbably already experienced—

¹ The best literary estimate of Hamlet, prior to the death of his father, is no doubt the well-known one given by Goethe in *Wilhelm Meisters Lehrjahre*, book iv., chap. iii. But the great critic does not seem to lay sufficient stress on what we must take to be his profoundly meditative disposition.

The heavy and the weary weight
Of all this unintelligible world.

From this period all Hamlet's meditations take a pessimistic turn. He reflects in something of the mood of a Greek skeptic on the difference between being and seeming. Like Timon, only more sedately and philosophically, he points out the gulf between human appearances and their corresponding realities. One result of his cogitation on his misfortunes is to awaken Job's wish in a similar case for death. Still there was nothing in these events, so far as Hamlet knew their causes, to evoke resolution or stimulate action. He was still only a dreamer, a passive and discontented theoriser, a thinker whose reason was quite at the mercy of a tender but vivacious many-sided imagination, when an event happened calculated to rouse him from his philosophical brooding and hurry him incontinently to the performance of "actions of great pith and moment". In other words he had that memorable interview with his father's ghost. We shall see further on the practical effect of this impulse, when we come to examine the course of conduct that followed. With reference to our present subject—the consideration of his general speculative opinions—it is only needful to remark that except as intensifying his gloomy outlook on the universe, increasing his aversion towards his uncle, and providing new material for ratiocination and skepticism, it produced no effect on his philosophy. Already was the world to him "flat, stale, and unprofitable"; already had he suspected his uncle of committing some foul crime, and all that the Ghost did was to confirm for the time being his long-entertained suspicions.

The consideration of Hamlet's mental character and opinions before proceeding to investigate his skepticism in action is necessary, inasmuch as the latter is the natural out-growth of the former. Given a man with Hamlet's intellectual conformation, his moody, contemplative habits, his exquisite and many-hued sensibilities, his vivid and forceful imagination, and we should expect him to dally indefinitely with any important action that presented itself to him as a duty. We should anticipate the examination of the object from every conceivable standpoint, the alternation usual in such cases of resolution and hesitation, the investment of the issue in a motley array of conditions, circum-

stances and suppositions of all kinds, and eventually the procrastination of the act, until, possibly by accident or by the course of events, it accomplished itself. In other words, we should look for precisely the phenomena which we find in Hamlet. Happily, there is ample material for an exposition of what may be termed the Hamletic philosophy. Besides the occasional utterances of his wayward moods, all of them, however, bearing the impression of ingenuousness and intellectual honesty (for there is not only method but meaning in his madness), we have his famous soliloquies—the elaborate and well-reasoned disclosures by his own mouth of his thoughts and feelings. From these materials we are able to gather the nature of his ratiocination from the time when he began to think, and more especially from the date of his father's death—the event which coloured all his subsequent speculations. Thus we have his opinions on the universe, on providence, fate, fortune, suicide, death, the future world, humanity, human reason and philosophy, human passion and imagination, most of these being marked by the vivid fancy, the rapid generalisation, the uncertain dual-sighted reflection which distinguish all skeptical speculation.

1. We must, however, begin with his own personal qualities, and especially with that attribute of all others which permeated and coloured, and, to a certain extent, gave form to all the rest—I mean his imagination. This is the quality which, unrestrained, gave to Hamlet whatever madness he may be said to have possessed—what Shakespeare elsewhere calls “great imagination proper to madmen”. It is also the faculty which in a great measure gave birth to and sustained his skepticism in action. His own consciousness of possessing this faculty in excess, and being unduly subject to its sway, is proved by his own introspection. Thus he rates himself as a “John-a-dreams,” *i.e.*, an indolent visionary in respect of action. He deplores his weakness and his melancholy as likely to give evil spirits power over him. He admits that his imaginative power so far surpasses its ordinary scope that he could be “bounded in a nutshell and yet count himself a king of infinite space”. He confesses that his schemes and cogitations are so many and varied as to transcend the possibilities even of his thoughts. “I am very proud, revengeful, ambitious, with more offences at my beck than I have thoughts to put them

in, imagination to give them shape, or time to act them in." He knows the froward nature of all mental processes, for he says he will sweep to avenge his father's death,

. . . with wings as swift
As meditation or the thoughts of love.

He is aware of those speculations as to a future existence and other kindred matters which surpass human thought, as well as their effect on those who muse on them. The Ghost's presence is, he thinks, calculated to cause men—"fools of nature"—

So horribly to shake our disposition
With thoughts beyond the reaches of our souls.

But still more remarkable are his unconscious manifestations of a rapid, many-sided fancy. This is apparent in every utterance that proceeds from him. We note it, for example, in his first soliloquy; in his ready transmutation of a world of which he had grown weary, to an unweeded garden grown to seed and producing only things rank and gross in nature; in his perpetual distinctions between seeming and being; in his speculations on the future world; in his rapid pursuit of the body of Polonius and the noble dust of Alexander through more than the usual contingencies of mortality; in the vehement physical disgust which the skull of Yorick, contrasted with the familiar fondness with which its owner had in former days treated him, imparted to his sensitive feelings. We shall presently see how this quick and pregnant fancy entered with especial force into his determinations, how it served to colour all his contemplated action, and how it thereby introduced a skeptical suspense into his conduct which he is unable to overcome. It would be easy to show that imagination exercises a similar effect in the formation of skepticism in opinion. All the great skeptics as well as the great idealists of philosophy have been men of copious and many-sided imagination. Truth, posing as an ultimate dogma, has presented itself to them in the light of a substratum for unlimited fancy—as a body which in its naked state is unrepresentable and unrealisable until clothed upon with the many-hued raiment of imagination. This is why so many thinkers fly from phenomena to noumena, from the concrete to the abstract, from the relative to the absolute. This is why they appeal from actualities to potentialities, from being to

becoming. In the former they find an irksome limitation to their fancy, a painful circumscription of possibilities which they deem conceivable. For them no truth is demonstrated and ultimate until imagination has expended all its suppositions and theories upon it—until they have exhausted each and every aspect, both real and ideal, pertaining to it, and in the complex and infinite verities of the universe this consummation is not very readily achieved. Hence they settle down in suspense or imperfect certitude, for the two reasons that it leaves them the scope and justification for infinite theorising, which is an imperative necessity of their intellect, and, secondly, does not bind them in any case to a final and fixed presentation of truth. Thus the endless striving of Faust is the intellectual analogue to the indefinite hesitation in action of Hamlet, both being alike determined by excess of imaginative power. Nor, we may add parenthetically, does this similarity exhaust the parallelisms found to exist between knowledge and conduct in respect of the doubt pertaining to each. For, first, it holds good, both of one and the other, that their more important aspects are at once recognised and regarded as indisputable, while it is those further off or more complicated that are liable to doubt. Second, the relation of human will in any indemonstrable matter or doubtful issue is found to be the same, both to conviction and to action. Hence we have the notable fact that intellectual doubt has often no other significance than that it is a procrastinated conviction, just as the morbid hesitation of such thinkers as Hamlet implies a postponement of act. No doubt there is a form of intellectual skepticism which rejoices in the perpetual discharge of its suspensive functions and neither expects or desires its termination. But there are also many sensitive minds whose reputed skepticism only implies a present incertitude in matters of grave concernment wherein demonstration is for the time unattainable, but who contemplate in some remote future the determination of their doubts. Prometheus, for example, looked forward, though vaguely, to a deliverer from the tyranny of Zeus, and Job prospected a vindicator of his righteousness from the false accusations of his friends. Examples of this kind are numerous in the sphere both of religion and philosophy. Thus there are thinkers who postpone the final form of their creed—as Constantine the Great

did his baptism—to a late period of their lives, hoping for a fuller light than they now enjoy, while, as regards philosophy and science, it need not be stated how many of their conclusions are regarded as provisional only, even by their warmest advocates.

2. Returning to Hamlet's skepticism, we find another contributing cause of it in the character of his ratiocination, and his opinions on the subject matters of reason and philosophy. Goethe in a memorable and beautiful image described the Hamletic catastrophe as the result of planting an oak seedling in a beautiful vase. To us the simile seems altogether misleading. Like every other genuine skeptic, Hamlet is not the victim of limitation but of infinitude. His purposelessness arises in part from the very obviousness of his task, as if it were a kind of mental reaction against its supposed urgency. This is shown by his perpetual complaint of its imperative character. But still more is it prompted by the many-sided indefiniteness with which his own minute and subtle reflection has invested it. It is not that the task is too gigantic for his powers, but his powers as he conceives them are out of all proportion beyond the requirements of his task. The vase—were the inversion of the simile possible—is too great for the seedling planted in it. The plant endeavours to exhaust its environment and dies in the attempt. A temper less meditative, a reason less many-sided and comprehensive, a conscience less casuistical and refining, a resolution less cautious and timorous would have achieved the work without difficulty or delay. The task required prompt action; Hamlet possessed neither promptness nor practical energy. It demanded instant activity; Hamlet gave it consideration. It needed a doer; Hamlet was emphatically a thinker.

Nothing is more common than to account philosophy impracticable. The thinker's occupation is in popular opinion theorising and contemplation. With the real concerns of life and humanity he can have no direct and vivid interest. Occasionally this popular prejudice takes the form of extreme injustice, as, for example, when it is employed to exclude an illustrious thinker from a legislative assembly; but that something may be urged on its behalf must be admitted. It was clearly the opinion of Shakespeare. Put in one way, the argument of "*Hamlet*" might be thus briefly given: Take a philosopher—a meditative, studious

recluse—place him in actual contact, not with a thought problem to be reasoned on, but with a deed to be done, and he will comport himself as does Hamlet. He will display a maximum of speculation with a minimum of practical energy. His goal will become the centre of a labyrinthine maze of ratiocinations, considerations, doubts and vacillations, and thus be lost sight of for ever unless it should be again revealed by chance. For Hamlet is essentially a philosopher; not only so, but his philosophy, like his imagination, is ardent, fearless, independent and, so far as his power is concerned, unlimited. This last trait of comprehensive ratiocination is early manifested in the drama. To Horatio's half-skeptical wonderment at the proceedings of the Ghost he replies in the well-known protest against all dogma derived from individual experience:—

There are more things in heaven and earth, Horatio,
Than are dreamt of in your philosophy.

The words aptly express both the strength and weakness of Hamlet's standpoint. The ascertainment of those occult things in heaven and earth unkenmed by man, was evidently one main object and occupation of his life. This persistent employment of reason—*Rerum cognoscere causas*—he justifies by the very nature of the faculty:—

What is a man,
If his chief good and market of his time
Be but to sleep and feed? A beast, no more.
Sure, he that made us with such large discourse,
Looking before and after, gave us not
That capability and god-like reason
To fust in us unused;

words which almost seem like an apology for that excessive ratiocination of which he is conscious and which he describes as

Thinking too precisely on the event.

He glorifies, in another well-known passage, the immense scope and power of reason. "What a piece of work is a man! how noble in reason! how infinite in faculty! in form and moving, how express and admirable! in action, how like an angel! in apprehension, how like a god."

But while thus admitting the potency and infinite sweep of reason, he is not less aware of its defects. Like Montaigne and

other skeptics, he both eulogises and vilifies this greatest of human attributes. As regards its power it is not only the source of intellectual but of moral discrimination, for "there is nothing good or bad but thinking makes it so"—a noteworthy observation which if we apply to his own task of avenging his father's death will go far to explain his delay in accomplishing the act, as well as suggest the numberless excuses, apologies, etc., which his inventive imagination put forward on behalf of his continual procrastination. But with the acknowledgment of the power is combined Hamlet's recognition of the inherent impotence of reason as the obverse of the medal. He has applied it to the great problems of the universe and of humanity, but without deriving satisfaction from such application. It seems to posit every great question in generalisations too large to be grasped, or in antitheticals which cannot be reconciled. It is unable to solve social problems, for it cannot explain the mutabilities discernible in humanity. Thus the popularity his uncle has acquired by his accession to the throne is inexplicable by philosophy—"Mine uncle is King of Denmark, and those that would make mows at him while my father lived, give twenty, forty, fifty ducats a-piece for his picture in little. S'blood, there is something in this more than natural if philosophy could find it out." Moved by this impotence of reason as well as by that apparent infinitude which seems too great to grasp the finite, Hamlet displays occasionally that weariness of speculation which attends all skepticism when infected with pessimism. He is, as we might expect, conscious of his own ignorance. Thus when Osric, coming to invite him to the combat with Laertes, addresses him, "I know you are not ignorant," Hamlet at once interrupts him with the words, "I would you did, sir, yet in faith if you did it would not much approve me," in other words, if you were aware of my knowledge that would be small satisfaction to me who am so conscious of my ignorance. In a similar spirit he abruptly refuses to reason on a proposition of Rosencrantz respecting ambition: "Shall we to the court? for, by my fay, I cannot reason".

Thus we have on the one hand a consciousness of reason as a faculty of infinite grasp and comprehension, and on the other an acknowledgment of its weakness and error, both of which attributes are provocative of practical skepticism. For if human

conduct be the outcome of reason, and reason, both in its greatness and littleness, allows scope for infirmity and error, it is evident that procrastinated action may be the highest possible proof of rationality.

3. Together with Hamlet's imagination and the character of his philosophy, we must include his passion or emotional susceptibility as a characteristic that throws light on his skepticism. Here, as in his other qualities, we can depend upon his keen and copious introspection for a faithful representation of his genuine character. Now, the very power and vivacity of his imagination point to one conspicuous attribute of his passion, *viz.*, its extreme sensitiveness to external occasions, impulsions and promptings of every kind. This peculiarity is manifested in every important conjunction of his life, from the time when "waxing desperate with imagination" he hurries after his father's ghost, to the final scene when in the spur of the moment he stabs his uncle. We must not, however, confound this hasty impulse, this sudden prompting of the will, with determination to action, for it is clear that these two species of resolution are not only unconnected, but exist inversely one to the other. In one sense Hamlet is resolute, for his passions are easily roused and his volition readily acted on; in another sense he is most irresolute, for he is tardy in action except in sudden contingencies which allow no room whatever for deliberation.¹ Indeed, we might say that all the actions of his life are distinguished by a rapid, unthinking, impulsive character. Except in very rare cases, this passionate mobility is not found in conjunction with a contemplative, moody temperament, and in Hamlet's own case the restraint of his philosophy undoubtedly served in his own opinion to moderate his impetuosity. This seems shown by his remark to Laertes, that although he is not rash and *splenitive*, yet he has something dangerous in him. Notwithstanding this disclaimer and his general attitude of philosophic self-restraint, he displays on occasions fits of ungovernable passion, for example, in his struggle with Laertes in the grave of Ophelia, though it is not impossible that this outburst was at least in part the simulated vehemence of passion befitting the "antic disposition" he had "put on". What is, however, of special

¹ Compare on this point Mr. Halliwell-Phillipps' *Memoranda on the Tragedy of Hamlet*, p. 14.

importance to our subject is Hamlet's own account of the influence of passion on his own cherished purpose—the avenging his father's death. This we have in the remarkable lines he himself indited for the players—which, as regards their bearing on Hamlet's character, are among the most important in the whole play :—

Passion is but the slave to memory,
Of violent birth but poor validity.
What to ourselves in passion we propose,
The passion ending, doth the purpose lose.
The violence of either grief or joy
Their own enactures with themselves destroy.

That Hamlet is here alluding indirectly to his own purpose is evident, while the reasons he assigns for its frustration are as evidently derived from his own experience. To him passion assumes the character of volition, it is the impelling cause of the contemplated action. But the intentions of passion are as short-lived as the passion itself, and this when it is violent is not only evanescent but self-destructive, just as all other human desires and efforts are self-consumed by their own intensity. Thus the passion-prompted purpose fails entirely of its achievement. How true this self-diagnosis is of Hamlet himself we shall presently have abundant opportunities of judging. It is quite in harmony with his consciousness of being too much the victim of passion that his reason for esteeming Horatio is his stoical indifference to passion. Suffering himself from

The slings and arrows of outrageous fortune,
he naturally values

A man that fortune's buffets and rewards
Has ta'en with equal thanks. . . .
A man that is not passion's slave.

We must also bear in mind that Hamlet does not conceive himself to be impelled solely by passion in his vengeful designs on his uncle. With his abundant self-knowledge and his habits of continual introspection he could not have so far ignored the dreamy imagination and many-sided reflection which formed so great a proportion of his mental character. Accordingly he speaks in more comprehensive phrase of

Excitements of my reason and my blood,

which he, in his apathetic indolence, has allowed to go to sleep.

4. In addition to the foregoing characteristics, we must mention another quality of Hamlet which in this particular instance clearly contributed to cripple his power of action, and was thus an element in his practical skepticism, though in ordinary actions it might not have had such an effect. I mean his tender, affectionate disposition. Like most imaginative and sensitive characters, he was more apt to take offence than to cherish resentment. He partook of the emotional profundity, the intense and comprehensive humanity, which commonly accompanies intellectual eminence. As a result, he was possessed of an ardently warm, sympathetic nature, though, like all sensitive people, he was ever ready to suppress or disguise it. Such a temperament was, indeed, necessary for the purposes of the play, for the primary impulse—the motive of the drama—was his passionate affection for his father. A similar feeling, though combined with more reserve, is manifested by his love for Ophelia, his kindly regard for Laertes and his friendship for Horatio. Nor is it altogether wanting in the struggle of affection and indignation with which he regards his mother. In short, notwithstanding his genuine antipathy to his uncle and his determination to exact vengeance, it is evident that Hamlet was not “a good hater”. He lacked the concentrative force which denotes unconditional aversion. Much of the passionate objurgation which he bestows on Claudius is in truth a kind of safety-valve for his pent-up feelings—a compensating balance to weigh against his deferred purpose—a screen or veil behind which his reluctance to act may find shelter. He pours forth his feeling in words that he may postpone the deed without incurring, at least to the extent he otherwise might, the imputation of irresolution. His nature was, in truth, too broad, generous, many-sided and profound to cherish the mingled narrowness and pettiness of spiteful, malicious characters. It is noteworthy that his trustful, unsuspecting character is acknowledged even by his uncle, who in his plot with Laertes describes him as

being remiss,

Most generous and free from all contriving ;

and it is in complete accordance with this estimate that Shake-

speare represents him not as successfully contriving his uncle's death, but as himself falling an accidental victim to his uncle's plot.

Turning now from Hamlet's personal characteristics to his speculative opinions, we find that these also throw much light of an indirect sort on his character and help to explain his practical skepticism. The first of these in importance are his ideas on God, providence, fate, fortune, life and death.

Shakespeare has been designated by one of his profoundest critics, a pagan. While this judgment may be considered of doubtful appropriateness, it is certain that Hamlet is a semi-pagan. He has little more of the distinctive marks of Christianity than an ancient Greek or Roman might have possessed. No doubt he believes, in a vague sort of way, in the being of a God, in the existence of heaven, purgatory and hell, in final retribution, etc. But as to any over-ruling providence, any active concernment of the gods in human affairs, he holds that the universe both of nature and of man constitute alike a very chaos of disorder. Hamlet's ruling deity, that which exercises a direct superintendence over himself and his affairs, is fate. In point of fact, Hamlet is an unmitigated fatalist. This is at once shown by a cursory examination of his sentiments. Thus he regards his own birth as a predetermination of his destiny which he could not help or avoid.

So, oft it chances in particular men
That for some vicious mole of nature in them,
As in their birth—wherein they are not guilty,
Since nature cannot choose his origin, etc., etc.

His first soliloquy shows us that he had long meditated on his destiny and was satisfied of its general perverseness. When his father's spirit appears, its especial import for him is that it is a shadowy embodiment of his destiny. To the attempts of his companions to restrain him from following the Ghost, he exclaims:—

My fate cries out
And makes each petty artery in this body
As hardy as the Nemean lion's nerve.

After the commission of vengeance which he receives from this interview he considers himself partly the victim, partly the agent of fate:—

The time is out of joint :—O cursed spite,
That ever I was born to set it right !

Ordinarily, this fatalistic conception of human destiny is allied with determined volition and resolute action. Not a few of the great deeds, good and bad, of history have been prompted solely by such a persuasion. As a rule, the fatalist is more a man of action than of speculation, and intellectual narrowness and fanaticism have been the bases and concomitants of every scheme of fatalism that has ever emerged in human history. Hence although Hamlet starts with the theory that he is born to be his father's avenger, other considerations soon intervene, and chiefest of all, the fact that he is, in an especial sense, a thinker. With this latter attribute so strongly marked, even the stern decrees of fate become to him objects of speculation and inquiry, possibly even of distrust and doubt. It is interesting to note how Hamlet's idea of fate serves ultimately to thwart and delay his purpose, how the impulse to act is transformed into a dissuasive from action. For if fate is the supreme governing power in the universe, it is necessarily superior to all human devices. Not only is it a power which does not need man's feeble co-operation, but which frequently even opposes human will. Hamlet describes this conflict in his own lines :—

Our wills and fates do so contrary run
That our devices still are overthrown,
Our thoughts are ours, their ends none of our own.

With this altered estimate of the meaning of fate, we are not surprised to find something like a resolution on the part of Hamlet to let the tragedy which he foresaw solve itself as it will. Hercules himself cannot alter the predestined course of events :—

Let Hercules himself do what he may,
The cat will mew, and dog will have his day.

In fulfilling the decrees of fate, indiscretion is sometimes better than profound contrivance :—

Our indiscretion sometimes serves us well
When our deep plots do pall : and that should teach us
There's a divinity that shapes our ends,
Rough-hew them as we will.

In a similar mood of blind reliance on fate he enters upon his contest. To Horatio's wish to defer the conflict he replies : " Not

a whit, we defy augury : there's a special providence in the fall of a sparrow. If it be now, 'tis not to come ; if it be not to come, it will be now ; if it be not now, yet it will come ; the readiness is all." And thus the fateful catastrophe is, so far as he is concerned, the purest accident. Here, also, we must notice that Hamlet discriminates, as does Shakespeare himself throughout his works, between fate and fortune. The former, like the Greek *Moirai*, is the fatal, onward-moving, all-accomplishing destiny which is equally inevitable and invincible. The latter, though equally out of human power, presides over the smaller mutations and variations of human existence. The first is the type of constancy and continuity, the second of mobility and fluctuation. For the former Hamlet manifests the profoundest respect and dread, for the latter the greatest possible contempt, as may be seen from the passages in which her attributes are discussed. Both fate and fortune are, however, ideas which minister to Hamlet's indolence and his skepticism in action, the former by its omnipotence, the latter by its changeful, uncertain character. If fate accomplishes its purpose, why need he interfere ? If fortune is mutable, why try to direct her endless caprices to any definite end ?

Equally skeptical are Hamlet's opinions on the universe, humanity, life and death, the spirit-world, etc. Here also emerges his profound pessimism. Among his earliest utterances is his description of the world as "weary, flat, stale and unprofitable". It is an unweeded garden producing only noxious and unsightly growths. Later on he shows still more fully how the ordinary aspects of the universe have been transformed by his sombre imagination—"It goes so heavily with my disposition that this goodly frame, the earth, seems to me a sterile promontory ; this most excellent canopy, the air, look you, this brave o'erhanging firmament, this majestical roof fretted with golden fire,—why, it appears no other thing to me than a foul and pestilent congregation of vapours". In another vein of disaffection with mundane attributes, he reasons on the vacillation of the world, especially as being in some sort a warrant and justification of his felt changes of purpose :—

This world is not for aye, nor 'tis not strange
That even our lives should with our fortunes change.

No doubt Hamlet's universe was, in great part, an expansion of

that portion of the world with which he was acquainted. His inborn tendency to infinitise, to transmute the particular into the general, to merge the concrete in the abstract, is seen in every phase and outcome of his thought. Hence his world is only an enlarged Denmark, and manhood everywhere are Danes—characterised by those vices with which his misanthropic humour has in part invested them. To Rosencrantz's remark that the world is a prison if Denmark be one, Hamlet rejoins: "A goodly one in which there are many confines, wards and dungeons, Denmark being one of the worst". He takes a moody delight in pointing out the faults of his countrymen. He lays stress, for example, on the drunkenness for which Denmark was in the time of Shakespeare notorious. Extending these feelings so as to include all men, Hamlet's skepticism with respect to humanity is well-nigh unbounded. With the exception of his father and Horatio, the rest of mankind are fools or knaves. Men are "fools of nature," compelled to attempt the resolution of difficulties which transcend their powers. Men are mere pipes for fortune's fingers to play what tune she lists. The honest man is, in comparison with his knavish brethren, in the ratio of about one in ten thousand. He recommends Ophelia not to marry, for all men are arrant knaves. He inveighs against the frivolity and fashion of women, as well as against the hollowness and hypocrisy of men. Virtue cannot obtain its deserved recognition, for however chaste a woman may be she cannot escape calumny. Whether he considered it as the cause or the effect of these manifold imputations, Hamlet, like most pessimists, regarded the age as peculiarly evil. The time was out of joint and went lamely, and he bemoans the office forced on him of making it walk straight. The age he characterises as pursy, drossy, etc., as if it were a bloated mass of corruption:—

For in the fatness of these pursy times,
Virtue itself of vice must pardon beg.

From another aspect—that of culture—he despises it. The drossy age dotes on men like Osric who have caught the "tune of the time, and outward habit of encounter; a kind of yesty collection which carries them through and through the most fond and unwinnowed opinions; and do but blow them to their trial, the bubbles are out". With all its hollowness and superficiality, men

of the time are like the first clown, so absolute and dogmatic that it is needful to speak by the card or the speaker will be undone by equivocation. That existence is, under the circumstances, an unqualified evil need scarcely be added. Hamlet's judgment on this point is seen in many of his utterances, especially in the celebrated soliloquy "To be or not to be". Almost his first words in the play express his disgust with the world, while his latest breath is spent in bidding Horatio—

Absent thee from felicity awhile,
And in this harsh world draw thy breath in pain,
To tell my story.

Much of Hamlet's skepticism is explained by the distinction he instinctively made on all subjects between being and seeming, or between appearance and reality. Here he is in harmony with the greatest skeptics of the world's history. The common aim of all these thinkers was to dig beneath the phenomenal to discover the real or the true. Their skepticism consisted in their distrust of what was outward and superficial. Similarly, Hamlet is keenly alive to the discrimination of reality and appearance. The universe, humanity, existence, are all appearances behind which lie dread realities. The former may be and are probably fictitious, the latter only are infallibly true. Hence he endeavours in all matters to penetrate the seeming and to attain to the genuine truth. Thus when his mother attempts the customary condolence on his father's death—

Thou know'st 'tis common all that lives must die—

he answers bitterly, "Ay, madam, it is common," and to her rejoinder—

If it be,
Why seems it so particular with thee?—

he immediately replies, "Seems, madam! nay, it is; I know not seems," followed by an indignant protest that his mourning for his father is sincere, and is not to be denoted by the customary semblance of grief:—

For I have that within which passeth show;
These, but the trappings and the suits of woe.

All the events attending his father's death and his uncle's accession and marriage were but ghastly and unreal semblances of

sorrow, of love and of loyalty. Not that all this mockery was unique. On the contrary, false sorrow was as common as its countless occasions. The tear of hypocrisy and the smile of villainy were alike attributes of humanity. In a similar spirit he contrasts the glorious appearance of earth, of heaven, of reasoning humanity, with his own truer impressions of them. In short, he rejects the seen for the unseen, the appearance for the reality, the relative for the absolute. Nor is this antithetical habit limited to seeming and being. Hamlet shares that aptitude for collocating antagonisms which is a frequent mark of the skeptic, which must, indeed, characterise every equipoising intellect. Thus he weighs existence against non-existence—the advantages against the drawbacks of suicide. He recognises the doubleness that exists in most mundane things. He notes the double property of custom, as regards virtue and vice, the twofold relation of love and fortune. He delights in dividing his personality into its constituent parts. He discriminates, for example, between himself and his machine (his body) and makes a division between himself and his madness. In a similar manner he splits up the physical world and mankind into their real and apparent aspects. In short, almost every object with which he comes in contact presents itself to him in a twofold light, and gives him opportunity for his favourite exercise of ratiocinative equipoise. No reasoner ever took such elaborate pains as did Hamlet to compare the pros and cons of suicide, probably no man was ever less likely “to make his quietus with a bare bodkin,” or with anything else. Here, moreover, seems the proper place for noting the curious indirect light which his speculations on the spirit-world throw on his skepticism. No man had ever received more convincing proofs of a future existence in its most personal and generally received form. A tithe of such evidence would have converted to firm believers ninety-nine skeptics out of a hundred; but it is remarkable that when Hamlet, soon after that memorable interview with his father’s spirit, reasons on the state of the dead he makes no allusion to the awful disclosures he received on that occasion. He speculates on the dreams that may occur

When we have shuffled off this mortal coil,

but says nothing of the dread realities borne witness to by the

Ghost. The state of Purgatory then so forcibly described disappears from his mind as readily almost as the command of the beloved parent who professed to suffer it. In the same soliloquy he speaks of the dread of something after death as merely a possible contingency, and of "the bourne from whence no traveller returns," as if he had never held converse with his father's spirit. Quite in harmony with this half-expressed feeling that death is the end of all sentient existence, are his references to it as a final and happy rest and as if no retribution pertained to it. This seems the idea underlying his wish :—

O that this too, too solid flesh would melt,
Thaw and resolve itself into a dew.

And it is also expressed in his dying request to Horatio :—

Absent thee from felicity awhile ;

in which he undoubtedly refers to the character of the state he himself expected to attain on his decease.

Besides these general opinions, all more or less of a skeptical character, we have minor intimations of the existence, in other directions, of a similar turn of thought. Hamlet, for example, is a nominalist, he is always ready to separate the word, as the outward sign, from the inward truth and reality which it betokens. When Polonius asks him what he is reading, his reply is, " words, words, words "—an answer which could only have emanated from one who instinctively recognised and despised externalities of all kinds. He discriminates between the act and the word, and laments the tendency of the former, in his own case, to evaporate in the latter. On the other hand, in his colloquy with his mother he declares his intention of speaking daggers, but using none.

With all these characteristics and opinions, Hamlet's practical skepticism is a foregone conclusion. When every object without and within presented itself in so many conflicting and diversiform aspects ; when his views of God, fate, the world, humanity, were so fully permeated with doubt ; when meditation assumed within him such tyrannous and overweening power, it was inevitable that the faculty of practical energy should be fatally crippled, that Hamlet should exemplify that peculiarity which we have termed skepticism in action.

We must now trace this skepticism from its sudden commence-

ment to its abrupt termination—in other words, we must pursue the alternation of resolve and doubt which constitutes the main plot of the drama.

The first outburst of Hamlet's purposefulness is occasioned by the appearance and injunction of his father's ghost. He must avenge his death. He at once accepts the imposed task as a solemn and imperious duty. For the moment there is no question of propriety, of prudence, of possible injustice. His father's blood, like Abel's, seems to cry for vengeance from the ground. Only the mention of murder fires him. He exclaims with vehemence:—

Haste me to know it, that I with wings as swift
As meditation or the thoughts of love
May sweep to my revenge,

—a determination which his father's spirit, with a possible reference to Hamlet's usually inactive temperament, thus commends:—

I find thee apt,
And duller should'st thou be than the fat weed
That roots itself in ease on Lethe's bank,
Would'st thou not stir in this.

And to the Ghost's injunction to remember him Hamlet exclaims:—

Remember thee?
Ay, thou poor ghost, while memory holds a seat
In this distracted globe (*i.e.*, his head).

Here it is important to observe that Hamlet has in this interview: 1. An explanation of his puzzles. 2. The strongest possible inducement to action. That both are inadequate as motives, we shall shortly discover. His position resembled that of a truth-seeker desirous of certainty, who fully believes he has attained it. He makes a discovery, for example, which all at once throws a flood of light on his former uncertainties. He is on the point of dogma pronouncement, just as Hamlet is on the verge of action. He is about to avouch his ultimatum on the subjects controverted, when he is held back by his inborn passion for speculation. Impelled by this and by the gravity of a final decision—which always presents itself to such natures in an exaggerated aspect—he resolves not to decide before once more considering the matter. This he does with the extreme caution and carefulness befitting such an occasion. But the investigation,

protracted as it inevitably will be, serves to disclose new sources of doubt, or at least new reasons for delay. The more the issue is examined, the less simple and inevitable does its decision appear. At least there is no imperative urgency. Decisive acts are irrevocable, and it is better, not to say more agreeable, to prolong the preliminary consideration than to precipitate a conclusion which might afford ground for unavailable regret. This standpoint, transferred from conviction to action, is that of Hamlet. His interview with the Ghost is a solution of the doubts he had previously entertained as to his father's sudden death. He is convinced by that mode of persuasion which has been regarded as the strongest of all others—the rising of one from the dead. Nothing seems thenceforward plainer or more imperious than his duty. At once he must kill his father's murderer. The time for action has come, the time for dreamy speculation has gone by. But immediately on this enthusiastic resolution follows the reaction of renewed consideration, and, consequently, of hesitation and perplexity. Hamlet is appalled by the plainness of his duty. An action more surrounded by uncertainty would have better accorded with his mental sympathies. He would have preferred a course of conduct that permitted tentative or half measures. He dislikes and distrusts the coercion which makes an act unavoidable—the sense of narrowness and limitation which permits no loophole of escape. In a word, like the skeptical truth-seeker, Hamlet is the victim of his largeness of generalisation. He instinctively invests the intended act with infinite complexities of motives, circumstances and results, and loses himself in the survey. He might have been ridiculed with the words which the clown in "Twelfth Night" addresses to his melancholy, irresolute master: "Now the melancholy god protect thee, and the tailor make thy doublet of changeable taffeta, for thy mind is a very opal. I would have men of such constancy put to sea, that their business might be everything and their intent everywhere, for that's it that always makes a good voyage of nothing."

Hamlet's discontent with his task and his mode of contemplating it are hinted within a few minutes after he has so eagerly accepted it.

The time is out of joint:—O cursed spite,
That ever I was born to set it right!

that is, he begins to contemplate himself as partly a victim, partly an agent of a perverse, incomprehensible fate, and characteristically expands his duty from the killing of his father's murderer to the rectification of a crooked epoch. The remainder of the drama is taken up with the varied phases of this practical irresolution and Hamlet's futile attempts to overcome it. Here it is important to distinguish between his resolution in thought and his resolution in act, between his determination to adopt means and his intent to consummate a given course of action. Notwithstanding his doubts, he never really abandons his purpose of avenging his father's death or of taking measures to accomplish it, any more than he ever relinquishes his attitude of suspense with regard to that act. In thought, therefore, and in contrivance, Hamlet is always more or less determined. It is in the transformation of intent into final action that his skepticism appears.

Among earlier illustrations of his resolution must be classed his affecting farewell with Ophelia, though it is not impossible that other motives and feelings play a part in that wonderful scene. He clearly saw the enormous import of his contemplated act. He recognised it as a tragedy in which he was probably destined to fall a victim. The suffering arising from

The slings and arrows of outrageous fortune

could only be ended by taking arms and opposing a whole ocean of troubles. He was therefore determined to sunder himself from all affections and interests which might in the dread moment of action have unnerved his will and paralysed his energy. With what stupendous effort he accomplished this, is seen in Ophelia's pathetic account of that farewell interview. That Hamlet herein displays resolution in action must be admitted, but it is a resolution which is strong in contriving and adopting means, and which may well be combined, as it was indeed in his case, with infirm energy in prosecuting those means to a definite issue. This feature of Hamlet's skepticism in action may be illustrated by the similar behaviour of skeptics in the region of conviction. There are many beliefs which in themselves are of difficult, it may be impossible, ascertainment, but which are led up to by speculations and conclusions of a more or less likely character; and these partial beliefs, these half-way houses on the road to assured con-

viction, are recognised and utilised by those who never achieve the real end of their journey, the final point of their ratiocination. This is the true *rationale* of probability, which is often, perhaps generally, more a means towards certitude than an ultimate end in itself. That men therefore accept unreservedly a probability is no proof that they will give their full assent to the doubtful truth lying beyond it, any more than Hamlet's resignation of his passion for Ophelia proves him to possess sufficient resolution to achieve his great purpose of vengeance on his uncle. Nor does this resemblance exhaust the parallelism hereby shown to exist between Hamlet and the intellectual skeptic. The latter is self-deluded by his willing adherence to probability, so as to persuade himself that he has no insuperable objection to final truth. Similarly, Hamlet's occasional manifestations of resolution, as in this instance, no doubt tended to conceal from himself his reluctance to prosecute his task to the bitter end. But while this parting scene with Ophelia seems thus to have an important bearing on Hamlet's practical skepticism, we are far from thinking that it may not also possess other implications. It is not unlikely, for example, that Hamlet was partly influenced in this despairing farewell by the pessimistic estimate of humanity, which long entertained had been confirmed by the disclosures of the Ghost. That he had reflected on the drawbacks of marriage is manifest. Probably his love of generalisation here as elsewhere might have caused him to extend to other married couples the unhappy conditions of that alliance which existed between his uncle and his mother. There seems also a genuine earnestness in his opinion that, constituted as were men of that time, it was not desirable to perpetuate such a "crooked and perverse generation".

But side by side with the symptom of resolve which is shown by his parting with Ophelia, are seen unequivocal signs of defection from his main purpose. This is betrayed by a gradually waning confidence in his father's spirit, and as a matter of course in all its horrible story and the injunction founded thereupon. For suppose the Ghost, being itself a mere spectral appearance, should be false. Suppose it should be not the "spirit of health" he first took it for, but a "goblin damned". Suppose its intents were wicked and not charitable. Then Hamlet's purpose was

almost as fiendish and cruel as the black deed of which it had impeached his uncle. Why should he deliberately slay in cold blood his father's brother, his mother's husband—detested though he was on other grounds—for a crime of which he was conceivably innocent? Was it not a common trick of evil spirits to assume the form of good, and to practise on such imaginative and melancholic persons as himself? Here, then, we see the undermining effects of skeptical retrospect. The great purpose of Hamlet's life seems gradually to assume a different form. Its truth is becoming transmuted to possible falsehood. Doubt and uncertainty have again assumed that supremacy over his mind of which the Ghost had for the time being deprived them. His high filial resolve to avenge his dead father may, for anything he knows, involve the greatest treachery to his name and blood.

No doubt Shakespeare has so contrived his plot that Hamlet shall have fair grounds for his vacillation and skepticism. He is not represented either as a fool acting entirely without motive, nor as a mere feather-pated prey of inconstancy. Hamlet is before all things a thinker, a profoundly philosophic reasoner, apt however as such persons are to let his "discourse of reason" overbalance his will-power and faculty of action. It is this weakness which has relegated the Ghost to the visionary world whence it seemed to come. He has speculated it, or nearly so, out of existence. In those days most men believed entirely in such appearances, but with the qualification that they were supposed to be due to diabolical origin. So far, Hamlet was not eccentric in his distrust. How he would have comported himself had the evidence of his father's murder been of another and more unghostly kind, we are left to guess. What would he have said, for example, of an actual witness who, hidden in the orchard on that memorable afternoon, saw his uncle perpetrate the dastardly act? In all probability his behaviour would not have been very different. We should then have had passionate conviction followed after no long interval by retrospective consideration and nascent doubt—stern determination to avenge succeeded by waning resolution. He would have been just as ready in devising excuses and reasons for procrastination. He would have urged the tendency of men to lie with as much good faith as he did the

probably diabolical origin of the Ghost. Perhaps his belief in human evidence, capable as it was of repetition, cross-examination and corroboration, might have lasted longer than his faith in a supernatural apparition, but the doubt of the skeptical thinker must in the long run have asserted itself. Leaving, however, hypotheses, Hamlet demanded some verification of the Ghost's story, otherwise his resolve was neither to credit it nor to consider himself bound by resolutions based on such a belief.

How completely parallel Hamlet's doubt in its origin and growth is to similar mental processes in the case of intellectual skeptics, is sufficiently obvious. Their fever fits of conviction are also succeeded, especially in matters indemonstrable, by the reactionary chills of doubt and mistrust. Nor does the parallelism stop there. Hamlet's conviction of his father's murder is founded on supernatural testimony without confirmation of any kind. But it is this fact which awakens and seems to justify his doubt. The very attribute which first of all imparted additional sanction to the evidence of the apparition becomes, on its reconsideration by Hamlet, its peculiar weakness. For similar reasons, intellectual skepticism, taking it as a whole, commences its attack on human convictions by calling in question those that claim to be based on supernatural evidence. This is, indeed, the normal procedure of human enlightenment and progress. Many are the ghost-attested beliefs which have gradually disappeared, like Hamlet's faith in his father's spirit, before the analysis of skepticism. Another symbolic meaning might thus be added to a drama already overweighted with them. Shakespearian critics in their search for hidden mysteries and abstruse analogies might have some ground for asserting that the root-thought of the play was to show how evanescent belief on purely supernatural evidence is. They might hazard the surmise that Hamlet was intended to personify the march of culture, or, still more rashly, they might define Shakespeare's concealed intention as the inculcation of the lesson gradually dawning on the men of his own time, that the teachings of any supernatural system to be valid must be corroborated by the witness of nature and reason. All we need assert is that Shakespeare does make Hamlet's skepticism the effect in part of the non-human and supernatural character of the ghost. Hamlet, it is intimated, was entitled to discredit by degrees the wondrous

story, partly because the narrator was not of earth, partly because in the belief of those days the Ghost might have been an emissary of the evil one. This, however, is by no means the sole reason of what we may from this point designate Hamlet's suspended action. Excuses and apologies for the non-fulfilment of the Ghost's commands are as readily conceived by him as reasons for suspended belief in any given dogma are by the intellectual skeptic.

Hamlet's belief in the Ghost being thus gradually undermined, he looks about for some mode of testing it. This he finds in the opportune arrival of the players. He will make them play a dramatised version of his father's death before his uncle, and see if he can thereby catch his conscience. The importance of this players' interlude, as indicating Hamlet's genuine character, has never in my judgment been sufficiently insisted on. It proves conclusively how entirely occupied his mind was with its general task of introspection, and especially with its then attitude of suspended action. Thus in his first interview with the players he makes them repeat a particular speech, the theme of which is Pyrrhus's suspended action when about to slay Priam:—

Lo ! his sword,
Which was declining on the milky head
Of rev'rend Priam, seem'd i' the air to stick,
So as a painted tyrant Pyrrhus stood,
And like a neutral to his will and matter
Did nothing.

Not impossibly he regarded this lull before a storm with something of a wistful hope that it would lead in his case, as in Pyrrhus's, to determined action. So, also, he finds in the players' emotion when speaking of Hecuba a reproof of his own cooled passion in respect of his father's death, and an incentive to prompt action. He asks indignantly:—

What would he do
Had he the motive and the cue for passion
That I have ?

Stimulated by the players' tears for Hecuba, he for a time relapses into his first conviction of his father's murder; he storms at himself for his cowardly forbearance and then vents his fury on his wordy rage, as if he meant that his intended action should

evaporate in words. Ultimately he thinks it not unlikely that the Ghost was the devil.

This scene, together with the lines he wrote for the players, serves clearly to show that Hamlet shared one striking peculiarity of intellectual skeptics, such as, for example, Montaigne. He was not only addicted to introspection, but he loved to contemplate, especially the fitful alternation of resolution and hesitation which characterised his suspended purpose. Sometimes he does this with much show of indignation at his infirm resolution, but this is accompanied with keen insight into the mutations of his thought, a lively sense of the force and direction of each thought-wave as it passes through his consciousness, and an appreciation of the variety in kind and power of every such emotional change. Whoever reads in their sequence the soliloquies, will perceive clearly Hamlet's sympathetic relation with the suspense he affects to dislike. These remarkable utterances, which are only outspoken acts of introspection, possess all the same character. 1. They are outpourings of an overcharged feeling. 2. They are excuses for suspended purpose. 3. They are meant to stimulate and rouse him into activity. Their general character is seen by the best known of all these self-addresses—"To be or not to be," etc. In this he meditates, as in his first soliloquy, on the question of suicide. The problem bears an interesting resemblance to his own once cherished purpose and its result. Thus it is evident that death to most human beings is preferable to the continued endurance of the miseries of existence. (Here, again, his utter forgetfulness of the "poor Ghost" and his story is clearly shown.) Why, then, do mortals prefer life? Because the condition of the dead is uncertain. "The dread of *something* after death puzzles the will,"—

And makes us rather bear those ills we have,
Than fly to others that we know not of.

For this reason the native hue of resolution is sicklied o'er by the pale cast of thought. It is impossible not to recognise in this reflection an indirect allusion to his halting purpose. That his father was murdered by his uncle is at least as certain as that death is better than life. Why cannot he then take his revenge? Because he is appalled by the probable results of such an event.

He knows his present misery, but cannot forecast the issue of its enforced and abrupt termination. Thus:—

Enterprises of great pith and moment,
With this regard their currents turn awry,
And lose the name of action.

Returning to the players' interlude, we find Hamlet still brooding over his suspended purpose. In the lines he himself wrote for the performance before his uncle he alleges more than one excuse for the non-accomplishment of his task. 1. Purpose, being identical in his opinion with passion, is ever short-lived. 2. The mutations of the world justify the fickleness of mankind. 3. Fate or destiny has a purpose of her own, and needs not man's co-operation. From all which we may gather that if Hamlet was "unpregnant of his cause" he was pregnant enough of apologies for refusing to carry it to effect.

At this point his doubt is once more transmuted to certainty. The issue of the play before the King seems an ample confirmation of his own suspicion and the Ghost's testimony. At the moment he is willing to "take the Ghost's word for a thousand pounds". He experiences a return of his murderous intentions:—

Now could I drink hot blood,
And do such bitter business as the day
Would quake to look on.

In a word, he is once more in the position of the truth-seeker who seems to be in the immediate presence of the object of his quest.

With wonderful dramatic art, Shakespeare has contrived that on this second and confirmed outburst of conviction Hamlet shall have the opportunity for which he pretends to seek. The strength of his determination is suddenly tested. Accidentally, while on his way to an appointment with his mother, he discovers his uncle in the act of prayer. But the result remains the same as before. With the opportunity comes the old infirmity. On the very heels of his certitude treads doubt. In the very noteworthy soliloquy of Hamlet on this occasion, Shakespeare appears to have had in view the ready skill of dispositions like his to find excuses for procrastinated action, as well as the occasionally extravagant or even outrageous character of such pleas. Nothing could in my opinion be a greater mistake than to charge Hamlet with really

entertaining the diabolical feelings to which he gives vent on this occasion. They are inconsistent with humanity in its most inhuman form, and are quite incompatible with a nature so tender, manly, and sensitive as his. The loathsome excess of malignant misanthropy which they disclose would disgrace even Timon in his most fanatical mood. At this point, again, the parallel between the intellectual skeptic and the skeptic in action is instructive. Just as men of Hamlet's temperament are fertile in devising the most unreasonable excuses for postponing action, so are skeptics in belief equally ingenious in assigning reasons that are unreasonable for the purpose of staving off an unwelcome conviction—one that fails to satisfy the utmost demands not only of reason, but of imagination. The history of skepticism teems with examples of thinkers who are as prompt in excusing their non-belief of any given truth as Hamlet in the scene before us in declining to kill his uncle. Nor, we may add, does Hamlet deceive himself on this occasion. Notwithstanding all his vapouring and his pretensions to more than fiendish purpose, he is fully aware that he is merely deceiving himself. He has been engaged in his favourite occupation of "drawing a red herring across the trail". As he finishes his soliloquy the thought recurs to him that he is on his way to see his mother. He stops suddenly short and says:—

. . . My mother stays:

—This physic but prolongs thy sickly days.

The last line is evidently addressed not, as commonly supposed, to his uncle, but, *sotto voce*, to himself. It is a kind of introspective reaction—his comment on the scene in which he knows he has been playing a fictitious part. He recognises his old aptitude for excuses, and justly regards that readiness as a physic which helps to protract his sickly state of practical suspense.

The second (and last) appearance of the Ghost while he is in conference with his mother, Hamlet immediately interprets as a reproof to his tardiness, though it is observable that no fresh outburst of resolve follows upon it. It is clear that with increased familiarity with the spectre he has himself fallen a prey to

That monster, custom, who all sense doth eat.

Hamlet's next important act of introspection is prompted by the expedition of Fortinbras

to gain a little patch of ground
That hath in it no profit but the name.

In this enterprise, undertaken, as he says, for the sake of a straw or "an egg-shell" (so he terms ambition), he discerns a loud-voiced reproof of his own tardiness.

How stand I then,
That have a father kill'd, a mother stain'd,
Excitements of my reason and my blood,
And let all sleep? while, to my shame, I see
The imminent death of twenty thousand men,
That for a fantasy and trick of fame
Go to their graves like beds.

His unaccomplished purpose seems to ally him to reasonless beasts. With characteristic indecisiveness he professes to be ignorant whether the dulness of his projected revenge is caused by too little or overmuch thought.

Now, whether it be
Bestial oblivion, or some craven scruple
Of thinking too precisely on the event;
A thought which quarter'd hath but one part wisdom,
And ever three parts coward, I do not know
Why yet I live to say, "This thing's to do";
Sith I have cause and will and strength and means
To do't.

By these reflections he so bestirs his resolution that he determines:—

O, from this time forth,
My thoughts be bloody or be nothing worth!

though it must be added he afterwards displays no immediate desire of prosecuting those murderous intentions beyond their cogitative stage.

His partial voyage to England is only remarkable for our purpose by showing how ready and fertile in resource a man like Hamlet might be in the lesser contingencies of life, while stupefied by any great critical emergency. The similarity of this characteristic to corresponding qualities in the case of intellectual skeptics, has already been noticed. No doubt the discovery which he made on that occasion contributed in some degree to whet his blunted purpose. There is a passionate eagerness for vengeance

manifested in his summary to Horatio of his uncle's many crimes. He asks his friend

—is't not *perfect* conscience
To quit him with this arm ? and is't not to be damn'd
To let this canker of our nature come
To further evil ?

—a demand which, notwithstanding its fiery terms, still seems, by its reference to *perfect* conscience and also by its appeal to Horatio's opinion, to disclose a halting determination. He is, however, fully conscious that no time is to be lost. His uncle will soon learn the issue of his treacherous mission to England. Though here again his infinitising aptitude extends the interval to the totality of a human life—

. . . the interim is mine,
And a man's life's no more than to say "one".

But both the resolution and his sense of the velocity of time appear to pass off. He relapses into his mood of indolent fatalism, regards the object to be achieved as if it were only the work of fate in which he himself was not immediately concerned. Even his bitter indignation against his uncle seems to be mitigated, for when he proceeds to his contest with Laertes there is even a respectful deference conveyed by his reply to the king's question: You know the wager ?

Very well, my lord ;
Your grace hath laid the odds o' the weaker side.

Hamlet, it is evident, did not as yet intend to carry out his long-delayed resolution.

The incidents of the combat and the final *dénouement* of the drama are quite in accord with Hamlet's character in the rest of the play. He remains to the last undecided as to his great purpose. His mother's death by drinking the poisoned goblet, Laertes' dying confession of his uncle's treachery—these are at last the impelling causes that induced him to stab his uncle. But it is clear they are purely accidental. The catastrophe would in all probability have happened just as it did, had Claudius never slain his brother, had the Ghost never appeared, and had Hamlet never formed the resolution of avenging his father's murder. As he himself designated it, the whole affair was but a "chance"—an

event as devoid of any plan, plot or prearrangement as any fatality could well be.

Not the least remarkable fact in this wonderful *dénouement* of Shakespeare's great skeptical drama is that Hamlet shows the ruling passion strong even in death. His uncle has died by his hand. So far, however accidentally, his great purpose has been achieved. And yet, when with his dying eye he casts backward a retrospective glance on the sudden event, he exhibits something like compunction for being implicated, though only partially, in such a tragedy. True, his uncle had plotted against his life in three different ways. Unwittingly, he had slain his mother, and in part caused the death of Laertes as well as himself. No less than four murders lay at his door, yet Hamlet, with that rapid conspectus of all conceivable contingencies which his habit of generalisation had taught him, thinks that his assassination of the murderer may need a kindly construction. He doubts what survivors may say of it all, so he exhorts his friend to set his character right with the world :—

O, good Horatio, what a wounded name,
Things standing thus unknown, shall live behind me,

—words which throw a wonderful amount of reflected light on the doubt and vacillation of his past life. Herein, however, we have a signal proof of Shakespeare's dramatic skill. Hamlet remains to his dying moment the skeptic in action he has ever been. The consummation of the plot has been brought about by a series of accidents, and entirely irrespective of his design or volition, and he reflects on the issue with his accustomed vacillation and uncertainty. A feebler dramatist or one less profoundly skilled in the mysteries of humanity would have connected the *dénouement* indissolubly with the original plot. He would have made it the final link of an unbroken chain. But Shakespeare was too well versed in the deeper love of human nature and the subtle ties which bind its activities to the laws of the universe. He had evidently—as we have already seen in his other plays—studied profoundly the Hamletic type of intellect. He had acquired his intimate knowledge of it, just as Goethe had learnt Faust, from introspection. He was well aware that such dispositions were for the most part incorrigible—that minds gifted

with many-sidedness, with keen sensibilities, with high imaginative and ratiocinative powers were, as a rule, indisposed to follow any straight path of conduct or to act when the action involved large and important issues. He had also studied or intuitively grasped the relation of such thinkers to their mundane environment. He knew that the complicated currents of the world do not always accommodate themselves to their moody and uncertain temperaments. On the contrary, events march onward with the firm undeviating step of fate, and the contemplative thinker, not caring to determine his purpose, finds it determined for him in some haphazard and unexpected manner. Nor are similar phenomena wanting in the allied case of intellectual skepticism. The persistent searcher after absolute truth rarely finds the imperfect certitudes, which are the only ones in his power, of precisely the kind he has anticipated. He speculates on his premisses or his chain of sequences, and forecasts the final discovery to which they seem to point, when, accidentally and without his volition, the discovery is made in some unthought-of manner—the result, not of the chain of proof he has so painfully elaborated, but of another, in the conception and formation of which he has had not the least share.

It would seem, then, that the parallelism here attempted between Hamlet, the skeptic in action, and those skeptics in speculation that are dramatically represented by Faust, and historically exemplified by such thinkers as Sokrates, Montaigne, and Lessing, is as complete as we could reasonably have expected it to be. The definite belief of the latter answers to the definitive purpose of Hamlet. The dislike of one as well as the other is prompted by correspondent motives and feelings. No doubt practical skeptics are rare. The exigencies of the world are not adapted to favour what Hamlet terms “thinking too precisely on the event”. Men must act often in critical conjunctions by the same iron law of necessity that compels them to live. Still something may, as I have already hinted, be urged on behalf of the few Hamlets of humanity. 1. We must at least allow that great actions or purposes, like great truths, are not always certainly based. How far removed from infallibility were the grounds of Hamlet's intended action we have already seen. His father's murder, if an undoubted fact, cannot be said to be demonstrated

by any of the methods he employed for the purpose ; and his suspended revenge was as justifiable in his case as the suspended belief of a thinker like Lessing in truths incapable of absolute proof. 2. We must concede, with whatever reluctance, that there are minds so constituted as to be naturally impatient of prescribed or coercive action, just as there are others who dislike prescribed beliefs. A given course of conduct, however right, is after all a fenced pathway permitting no deviation to right or left. But it is precisely this limitation that is repugnant to wayfarers of the Hamlet type. They dislike the bounded view, the impossibility of examining the landscape on either side. Besides, a prescribed path of duty is, by its very name, defined by others ; it absolves the traveller from any independent exercise of his own choice or will ; it robs him of every opportunity for spontaneity, for self-determination, for leisurely reflection ; in a word, for the unrestrained exercise of all those faculties in which Hamletic thinkers find their very highest enjoyment. 3. Regarded as decisive events, actions are final. Their performance implies an exclusion of all further considerations of an effective kind, of all discussion as to ways and means, times and opportunities. Attentive students of Hamlet will readily see how anxiously he debated every conceivable manner and befitting occasion of performing his task. It is evident he found no small pleasure in this perpetual survey of all the imaginable contingencies of the event, a pleasure akin to the skeptic's endless pondering and equipoising the divers aspects and conditions of any given truth. 4. Actions, like definitive beliefs, are pregnant with large results. Hamlet was evidently appalled by the stupendous effects which would have followed his assassination of Claudius. To attempt to justify such an event to his mother or the Danish nation on the sole evidence of a supposed spectral appearance would have been absurd. It would have been at once ascribed to his own ambition—an act of revenge on his uncle for anticipating his own accession to the throne. That intellectual skeptics have been similarly influenced by the supposed dire consequence of their reception of some given dogma is well known.

Before leaving our consideration of this wonderful tragedy, we may note the intellectual character of its other chief personages whom Shakespeare has intended to contrast with its

skeptical hero. Horatio, as the friend of Hamlet, shares his prominent qualities. He is also a thinker, an independent investigator of truth. He possesses a lively imagination, but keeps it more under restraint than does Hamlet, as is readily seen in the well-known churchyard scene. Something, too, he shares of Hamlet's skepticism and his ready aptitude for generalisation. His reply to Bernardo's question in the opening scene: "Is Horatio there?"—*i.e.*, "A piece of him," is quite Hamletic in the ready dichotomy of his personality. We are reminded of Hamlet's signature of his letter to Ophelia: "Thine while this machine is to him". Horatio's mode of merging the particular in some wide generalisation is another aptitude of his friend. He says of the appearance of the Ghost:—

In what particular thought to work, I know not ;
But, in the gross and scope of my opinion,
This bodes some strange eruption to our state.

Nor, again, is Claudius, who is ordinarily held to represent a stern, pitiless determination, which is diametrically opposed to Hamlet's sensitive conscience and his dreamy vacillation, devoid of methods of thought which closely resemble his skepticism in action. He comments, for example, on his marriage with Gertrude in the antithetical manner which we have noted as a characteristic of Hamlet:—

In equal scale weighing delight and dole.

He admits his irresolution in presence of divergent duties:—

And like a man to double business bound,
I stand in pause when I shall first begin,
And both neglect.

He reasons on the impediments which follow human resolve in a manner wholly indistinguishable from Hamlet's, excepting that he makes (and the difference is noteworthy) the obstacles in such a case external, whereas with Hamlet they are mostly internal:—

That we would do
We should do when we would ; for this "would " changes,
And hath abatements and delays as many
As there are tongues, are hands, are accidents.

But it is Polonius who is Hamlet's real antagonist—the superficial, talkative, conceited dogmatist, who has not the least doubt

of his sagacity, his prudence, his transcendent wisdom. The contrast as presented by Shakespeare is indeed instructive. While Hamlet, the profound thinker, is perplexed by conflicting opinions, by varied ratiocinations, this shallow prater does not even know the meaning of uncertainty. Hamlet points to his head as a "distracted globe". Polonius is willing to pledge his head as a proof of his infallibility. While Hamlet has always been the prey of self-mistrust, Polonius can look back on a career of wise insight into difficult conjunctions:—

And I do think, or else this brain of mine
Hunts not the trail of policy so sure
As it hath used to do, that I have found
The very cause, etc.

Hamlet is inclined to question the existence of all truth. Polonius declares that, given the circumstances, he would find

Where truth is hid, though it were hid, indeed,
Within the centre.

While Hamlet perpetually bemoans his ignorance and vacillation, Polonius is persuaded that he was never guilty of erroneous judgment:—

Hath there been such a time, I'd fain know that,
When I have positively said, "'Tis so,"
When it proved otherwise.

While Hamlet, like every true thinker, wishes to coin, stamp, and test his knowledge in his own mint, Polonius is profuse with scraps of borrowed wisdom, sententious maxims, and common proverbs, cheaply acquired and as cheaply retailed. In a word, while Hamlet has most of the qualities and merits of the comprehensive, much-meditating skeptic, Polonius has all the characteristics, with most of the demerits, of the complacent self-satisfied dogmatist. He thus takes his place, as observed in a previous essay, with the antagonists of Prometheus, with the "comforters" of Job, with Wagner in "Faust," and with Justina in "El Magico Prodigioso". As far as dramatic consistency is concerned, it was almost imperative that Hamlet should slay one who was more his intellectual opponent than Claudius himself, though, as the father of Ophelia, he could not do so otherwise than by mischance.

In conclusion, we must glance from the higher standpoint we have now attained at Hamlet's relation to the other great dramas of free-thought.

1. Like Prometheus and Job, he is at war with his surroundings. He represents one aspect of the dissonance which must inevitably emerge between the finite and the infinite. He is the victim of a remorseless fate, which is none the less harsh in that it assumes the form of imperious duty. No doubt the Greek Titan and the Hebrew patriarch consider themselves aggrieved primarily by their respective deities. Their quarrel is for the most part with the theological dogmas and opinions of their time. Hamlet, as we have seen, merges the idea of an overruling Providence with the allied conception of an irreversible fate, but with the government of the universe (signified alike by "Zeus" and by "Fate") he is, like Prometheus, at open feud. He also resembles the great Titan in the fact that he represents, though not always with equal resolution, justice against crime, human right against arbitrary tyranny, truth against falsehood and hypocrisy. He is further like him in that the motive of all his effort, one main element of all his suffering, is his own disinterestedness, since it is clear that Hamlet was actuated in his passion for revenge by filial affection for his excellent father, and by a sense of the irreparable loss Denmark had sustained by his untimely death. So far therefore his sufferings, like those of Prometheus, are in their nature vicarious. That there are, however, points of contrast cannot be denied. The high estimate which Prometheus had formed of humanity, its capability of progress, etc., differs much from Hamlet's contempt for the men of his time, though it is evident that his own relation to his fellow-men had been so embittered by his misfortunes as to make him incapable of pronouncing an impartial estimate on the point.

2. The special affinity which Hamlet bears to Job is that he is a vindicator of human rights against human falsities; he asserts the claims of the individual consciousness against social proscriptions and opinions. Like Job, Hamlet has been oppressed by the ruling powers of the universe. He has been placed in a world with which he is not in sympathy, and desires to be freed from an ungrateful existence. In his human companions he can find no pleasure. They are for the most part false and hypocritical. They obtrude

on his sensitive feelings without reserve or pity their own antagonistic judgments. They are anxious to reconcile him with things as they are, to induce his submission to "the powers that be". Hamlet, like Job, refuses an unworthy compromise with what he believes to be injustice, even though it may be seated on a throne. In moody solitude, but with an invincible sense of rectitude, he stands apart both from God and from men. He is perpetually puzzled by world-problems and aspects of duty which he cannot comprehend. Lastly, Hamlet both despises and refuses confidence in the unconquerable fate which is his ordinary conception of deity; treats it, in short, just as Job does the Hebrew Jahve.

3. Hamlet shares with Faust the irrepressible tendency to infinitise. Just as Goethe's drama represents man in his earnest struggle with the great problems of the universe, restlessly exploring every avenue to knowledge, and testing every pathway that promises to lead to happiness, returning, however, from the quest weary and dissatisfied, so Shakespeare's master character investigates the minor universe of humanity and gathers from his survey bitterness and unbelief. Faust represents the struggle of the finite with the infinite in the domain of speculative and intellectual research; Hamlet represents the same struggle in the arena of human life and social duty, for human conduct has, no less than human belief, its infinite and eternal aspects. Faust typifies freedom from tyrannical dogma and preconception, from slavish literalism; Hamlet, from social restraints and hypocrisies, and from the coercion of duties imposed without due warrant and authority. Faust longs for intellectual and scientific truth; Hamlet desires human and moral truth; while both one and the other partake alike of a despair of satisfying their *sacra fames*. Faust dislikes the cramping and benumbing effects of false knowledge and pretentious dogma; Hamlet directs his spleen against social usages and opinions with their customary hollowness and hypocrisy. Faust seeks eccentric paths of knowledge as a protest against the ordinary methods of human science; Hamlet affects an "antic disposition" in order to proclaim in part his contempt for the formal, strait-laced maxims of mere conventionality. The analogy between them might be pursued a step further with the effect of manifesting more contrast than similarity, *viz.*, in comparing the catastrophes respectively of Gretchen and Ophelia.

In this particular the contrast is altogether in favour of our great English dramatist. Ophelia is sacrificed, regretfully but necessarily, to the exigencies of the drama. Hamlet's passion for her comes into conflict with his prior and more important duty to his father, his country and his age. He resigns her after a terrible struggle on his own part, but with circumstances which to herself more than justified such resignation. Partly in consequence of that event, partly on account of her father's untimely death, she becomes deranged and commits suicide. Gretchen, on the contrary, is the innocent victim selected to illustrate the deep tragical extent of Faust's sensuality, or of human passion in its most inhuman character. Ophelia dies not only painlessly and unconsciously but in unstained maiden purity, while poor Gretchen adds to her own ruin and shame the murder of her child and mother, and, indirectly, the assassination of her only brother.

4. With Cyprian, the hero of Calderon's "*El Magico Prodigioso*," Hamlet may be said to share (1) the procrastination which delays as far as possible the decisive act in the one case, the decisive belief in the other; and (2) the tragic catastrophe of being themselves the victims of the course of events in which they play a leading part.

The general outcome of Shakespeare's great drama is twofold.

1. It is a striking illustration of the remark so often found in Shakespeare, that human passions, when great and overmastering, tend inevitably to consume themselves. They thus share the fate of all human enterprises which can claim connection with the infinite, even with truth-search itself. This destiny of theirs is, moreover, unaffected by the fact of their being justified or not. The ardour of self-devotion, for example, may consume itself as readily as the fervid impulse of hatred. That Hamlet's purpose of vengeance was destined to be consummated by some overwhelming tragedy which would prove fatal to himself is a foregone conclusion from the commencement of the drama. The forces which he assailed were too mighty for him. Social power, human laws, conventional usages, together constituted a quasi-human infinite against which his own personal infinite was incapable of successfully contending. And if for the moment he overthrew his foes it was only, like another Samson, by sacrificing himself in the effort.

2. Nor is it only as entertaining a deeply cherished passion that Hamlet's fate was doomed to be tragical, but also as a man who contemplated an act of supreme import. He was like a general entering into conflict with an enemy possessing a force greatly surpassing his own, or he might be likened to an adventurous traveller bent, on exploring an unknown and dangerous country. Like so many other human heroes, he finds the odds are against him, and it is to their superiority and irresistible force that he is compelled to succumb. Thereby Shakespeare might possibly have meant to teach us that human acts, considered in all their bearings, conditions, circumstances and results, are no less infinite than human passions or human convictions, while they evidently greatly excel these in importance. Hence caution in the performance of any momentous act, or doubt and hesitation as to its necessity, may be as justifiable as the skepticism which fears to enounce a determined conclusion in an indemonstrable matter. It seems doubtful, some might object, whether Shakespeare regarded Hamlet's reluctance to act as a virtue or as an infirmity. In my opinion he intended it to partake of both characters; it was a virtue—somewhat in excess, and so trenching on weakness. Undoubtedly, he intended Hamlet's infirmity, so far as he deemed it such, to be considered as pardonable. No character in the whole Shakespearian gallery secures more fully the sympathy and commiseration of hearers and readers. We might go further and say that no play has ever been so universally popular, not only among ordinary persons, but among the cultured, thoughtful and intelligent. To what does this general appreciation of "Hamlet" point unless to the tacit conviction of mankind that as among the insoluble problems, the complicated aspects and countless perplexities of the universe, there is room for intellectual doubt; so, also, in view of the practical difficulties, the conflicting duties, the varied entanglements pertaining to human and social life, may there be found an occasional justification for skepticism in action?

“EL MAGICO PRODIGIOSO ”

MOTTOES.

¿Cómo un hombre te arguyó
Con razon, á que no sabes
Responderle con razon?

CALDERON, *El Josef de las Mujeres*, Jorn. I.

All the human products, whether of thought or action, given forth by any creed or religious system will necessarily partake of the character of such system, just as a child reproduces the weakness or robustness of its parent. Hence the reasoned speculation or scientific inquiry educed by a narrow, superstitious creed will, like the consumptive child of consumptive parents, attest its parentage by its infirmity, even if it does not fully demonstrate it by premature death.

ANON.

Faith stands by itself and upon grounds of its own, nor can be removed from them and placed on those of knowledge. Their grounds are so far from being the same or having anything common, that when it is brought to certainty faith is destroyed, it is knowledge then, and faith no longer. With what assurance soever of believing, I assent to any article of faith, so that I venture my all upon it, it is still but believing. Bring it to a certainty and it ceases to be faith.

LOCKE, *First Reply to Stillingfleet*.

THE fifth of the dramas which we have classified as skeptical comes to us from Spain, and bears indubitable marks of its origin. As a drama of free-thought, having for its subject the perennial conflict between doubt and faith, between human reason and external authority, Calderon's "Wonder-working Magician" is by far the feeblest production on our list. Still it is as powerful as we have any reason to expect. Given the antecedents of Spanish history—long centuries of ecclesiasticism and despotism; and the chief characteristics of the Spanish temperament—its blind loyalty, its fervid and narrow piety; and we might have anticipated the mature out-growths of its chief dramatic productions. We might have expected some such expression of mistaken religionism as Calderon's immoral "Devotion of the Cross," or such an insufficient conception of doubt and belief as the same author's "Wonder-working Magician". In all other European countries in which the human reason and intelligence have recalcitrated against the domination of dogma, the tendency has been at once fostered and consecrated by means of its popularity. The *vox populi* has pronounced, in unmistakable accents, in favour of religious and civil liberty. Spain alone enjoys the unenviable distinction of being the only country in the world, making any pretension to civilisation, where despotic rule and ecclesiastical tyranny have enjoyed the popular favour. Were any proof of this needed, it might be found in the startling fact that even that "foulest spawn of time," the Inquisition, with its diabolical procedures and its holocausts of victims, was always a popular institution in Spain; and probably to the ignorant fanatics of rural Spain even at the present day an *Auto da Fé* would not seem a greater anachronism than a bull-fight.

We need not attempt to investigate the manifold causes of this strange phenomenon, or trace the horrible and benumbing effects of Spanish intolerance on every department of its material,

mental and artistic productiveness.¹ The task is moreover needless, inasmuch as it has already occupied many worthy pens. A brief glance will enable us to appreciate sufficiently the causes why Spanish literature has no more thorough or effective drama of free inquiry than the "Wonder-working Magician" of Calderon.

It must not be supposed that the repugnance which Spain has generally manifested to free culture belongs equally to the whole of its history since it was first Christianised; or that "the wild spirits of superstition and excessive loyalty," as they are termed by Buckle and Klein,² were indigenous to its earlier civilisation. Taking as a test that form of literature in which Spain has pre-eminently excelled, the dramatic, we find that its earliest products were marked by some appreciation of freedom and independence which were afterwards lost. The cause of this phenomenon is seen in the twofold parentage which may be assigned to the Spanish drama. 1. It was the issue of the interblending of heathen feasts with the festivals of the Christian Church. 2. And at a later period its further growth was partly determined by the combination of heathen romances with the religious shows, early mysteries, etc., of the Church.³ That the preponderant agency in both cases was religious rather than secular is shown

¹ On the benumbing effect of Spanish Catholicism on Spanish art, see, *inter alia*, Stirling's *Velasquez and his Works*, pp. 14-22.

² Buckle, *History of Civilisation*, ii., p. 461; Klein, *Geschichte*, i., p. 70. But a more analytical and profounder estimate of the Spanish character is that given by M. Adolphe de Puibusque in his *Histoire comparée des Litteratures Espagnole et Françaises*. "En France comme en Espagne, la galanterie s'associait à l'honneur et à la religion; ces trois mots réunis peuvent résumer l'esprit du moyen âge. Plus ardent néanmoins que le Français, l'Espagnol laisse déjà déborder sur tous ses sentiments le feu de la passion; chez lui l'hyperbole du langage est la mesure naturelle de l'exaltation de la pensée; devot pointilleux, romanesque, il exagère presque également les trois cultes auxquels il s'est voué."

³ On the ecclesiastical origin of the Spanish drama, compare Von Schack, *Geschichte der Dram. Lit. und Kunst in Spanien*, i., p. 34, etc., etc. F. Wolf, in his *Studien zur Geschichte der Span. und Portugies. Nationalliteratur*, aptly discriminates the sacred and secular elements in the Spanish drama by the terms "volkstümlich-komische" and "kirchlich-tragische," see pp. 570, 571.

by the after history of the Spanish drama. The religious and sacerdotal elements that entered into its birth and growth dominated over even when they did not entirely suppress the profaner elements conjoined with them. Hence what is true of the drama of every country in Europe is peculiarly true of the Spanish. Of all it might be said that their origin is religious. Of the Spanish alone it may be affirmed that not only its origin, but even more its growth and maturity, are ecclesiastical. Like all other departments of Spanish thought and art, it has no existence apart from the Church. Klein in his great work finds the commencement of the Spanish drama in the “Soliloquies” and “Conversations of Vices and Virtues” of Isidore of Seville.¹ They may at least be accepted as a landmark to distinguish the period when dialogue and a dramatic presentation were first introduced into the religious dumb shows already in use in the Church. Dramatic art was not in itself greatly furthered by the incursion of the Arabs into Spain in the eighth century,² though the proficiency of the invaders in lyric poetry and music, and the germs of chivalry which they introduced into a soil already well disposed for their reception, indirectly contributed to foster the early growth and to mould the later development of the Spanish drama. Other elements of a free culture introduced by the Saracens consisted in their generally progressive and enlightening influences. In commerce, agriculture, art, science, they exercised a beneficial sway on the land of their adoption, while their religious tolerance, in respect of which they were infinitely more Christian than their Spanish subjects, their stress on nature, etc., tended, within the circle of their influence, to neutralise the excessive sacerdotalism which had already taken possession of the Christianity of Spain. As a set-off to these benefits, however, it may be feared that the bitter animosities of rival races and religions operating for so many centuries helped to engender the fanaticism and intolerance which have always marked the Spanish character, and as a result the national drama. The special dramatic product of this portion of

¹ *Geschichte*, vol. i., p. 136.

² Von Schack is almost alone in assigning to Arab culture a directly fostering influence on the early Spanish drama. See *Geschichte*, etc., vol. i., p. 78. Compare on the other side Wolf, *Studien*, etc., pp. 574, 575.

the history of Spanish thought is the "Cid," which, in its diverse forms and transformations, may be accepted as the barometer which marks the growth of Spanish intolerance from the period of its publication in the twelfth century up to the time of Calderon. Originally a freedom-loving and rather republican hero,¹ the Cid partook of the religious development of his country, and became transmuted into a most pious, austere, and narrow-minded Christian knight. He is also the great national embodiment of chivalry. In this respect the influence of the "Cid" and similar productions was hardly salutary. Chivalry, excessive loyalty, a punctilious and morbid sensitiveness on points of so-called honour, have always been chief attributes of the Spanish character, and consequently of the Spanish drama, but the operation of these sentiments has been uniformly hurtful, at least in Spain, to freedom of thought and enlightenment. For in addition to its own stress on unworthy objects, as, *e.g.*, pride of birth, or feudal and anti-popular privileges, and on other advantages and duties of a servile, narrowing, and mind-benumbing tendency, the Church, with her usual astuteness, managed to concentrate no small portion of the devotion of chivalry on her own dogmas, personages, and institutions, and permitted no chivalry towards freedom and intelligence. As a result, there is no European literature, dramatic and otherwise, that possesses so few indications of free-thought, so few evidences of anything like intellectual independence, mental movement, or rational vitality, as that of Spain. From the earliest romances of the Cid to the end of the seventeenth century, there is no literary product that can claim to be animated by a spirit of free inquiry, though Klein mentions as a work of some enlightenment the "El Lucidario" of Sanchez IV., which had for its subject the opposition between natural science and theology.² Some few reformers and satirists in the

¹ Prof. Dozy thus describes one of the transmutations undergone by the Cid: "L'ancien Cid n'avait plus de raison d'être; ses fiers sentiments républicains convenaient bien peu au goût de l'époque; les qualités qui avaient fait de lui le héros chéri des chansons populaires s'effacèrent, et l'on oublia le Cid qui brava son roi, pour ne chanter que le tendre amant de Chimène" (Dozy, quoted by Klein, *Geschichte*, i., p. 314, note). Compare on the history of the Cid, Wolf's *Studien*, etc., p. 486.

² Klein, *Geschichte*, etc., i., p. 487.

fourteenth century subsequently set themselves against the graver abuses of the clergy. They attacked their greed and immorality, but did not dare to touch the doctrines on which the clerical power was based,¹ and which justified to a certain extent its abuses. There is no appeal from the Pope to Christ—from ecclesiastical creeds to the first principles of human reason and humanity. In a word, while Spanish literature stands in the foremost rank among those of civilised nations for imagination, delicate sentiment, grace, refinement, tenderness and pathos, it is absolutely devoid of intellectualism in the true sense of the term. Spain has romancers, chroniclers, historians, dramatists, and poets of the first order; she has no original thinker or philosopher. She has Cervantes, Lope de Vega, and Calderon, but no Descartes or Bacon, Hume or Kant. Still less has she any example of that rarest of rare unions, that amalgamation of poetry, dramatic art, and profound philosophy seen in Dante, Shakespeare, and Goethe.

As religion administered the chief primary impulse to the Spanish drama, so did it continue to sway its subsequent development, and eventually gave the final form to its mature and most characteristic productions. The *Autos Sacramentales* are by far the most distinctive outcome not only of the Spanish, but of the whole modern drama. At first the *Auto* and *Farsa* were two of many species into which the Spanish dramatists divided their works, but were afterwards employed exclusively to distinguish religious representations.² Thus the birth or separate existence

¹ Compare De Castro, *Historia de los Protestantes Españoles*, p. 26, where, comparing the invectives of Torres Nahavro against the Spanish clergy with the Lutheran Reformation in Germany, he says: “El fraile aleman solicitaba con la reformacion del clero de dal dogma; el religioso Español solo pedia la del estado eclesiástico”.

² The distinction between the *Auto* and the *Farsa* is difficult to comprehend clearly, nor are writers on the Spanish drama at all agreed in the matter. The *Autos*, as a rule, borrowed their subjects from holy writ, while the *Farsas* were generally allegories with a spiritual meaning. They have for this reason been compared respectively to the *Mysteries* and *Moralities*, but the comparison, as Klein remarks, does not thoroughly hold good. Compare Klein, *Geschichte*, ii., p. 121; and F. Wolf, *Studien*, pp. 597-602. The English reader may be referred for some account of the *Autos Sacramentales* to Abp. Trench’s well-known *Essay on the Life and Genius of Calderon* (chap. iii.), who, however, seems curiously blind to the intellectual and ethical degradation which was the legitimate outcome of the Spanish religious drama, and to Ticknor’s *History*, vol. ii., p. 249.

of the *Auto*, which may be placed about the end of the fifteenth or the beginning of the sixteenth century,¹ synchronises with events full of disastrous consequences for Spanish free-thought, or as much of it as may be said to have existed prior to the expulsion of the Saracens. It marks the rage of the Church against the secular drama. It signifies the establishment and growth of the Inquisition. It denotes the exclusive possession and perversion to its own interests of the stage by the Church. Thus the history of dramatic development in Spain presents a curious contrast to that which took place in all the other great nations of Europe. In Italy, France, England, and Germany the secular drama was the gradual outgrowth and issue of the religious, eventually transforming, absorbing, and annihilating its parent form, and during the process subserving the best interests of free-thought and enlightenment. In Spain we have a movement of an opposite kind. There the religious drama swallowed up the secular, and the process is found to be attended by a deterioration of the dramatic art, and by the portentous increase of ignorance, bigotry, and intellectual darkness. Klein has convincingly shown how the growth and popularity of the *Autos Sacramentales* are an infallible index to the increase of intolerance, hatred of culture, and irreligion on the part of the Spanish rulers and the Spanish people.² It is difficult to characterise, and hence to appreciate, these eccentric specimens of the dramatic art. Pedroso, an enthusiastic admirer of them, affirms that Spain, by their possession, has become "a priestly kingdom and a holy nation" (*un reino sacerdotal y una nacion santa*). The first result may be allowed *quantum valeat* without conceding the second in any large or praiseworthy signification of the term

¹ By this is, of course, meant the definitive separation of the *Auto* in its final and elaborated form from the ordinary religious drama of Spain. The latter goes back to the fifth century, A.D. Compare Wolf, *Studien*, p. 574.

² *Geschichte*, vol. ii., p. 103. With his usual passionate vigour, Klein thus describes the intellect-berumbing characteristics of the Spanish *Autos*: "Das Auto Sacramental kennt keine andere Vernunft als die freiwillig dem Glauben des Unbegreiflichen sich gefangengebende, d. h. sich aufgebende Vernunft; keinen anderen Verstand als den sich aufgebenden, d. h. an sich verzweifelnden Verstand; die absolute Unvernunft, also den absoluten Unverstand" (*ibid.*, p. 450).

“holy”.¹ He, moreover, defines them as “a mixture of merriment and asceticism” (*mezela de jovialidad y ascetismo*). Perhaps the semi-religious usages to which they bear most resemblance are the festas and religious holidays now celebrated in certain rural districts of South Italy, or the strange admixture of Lent and Carnival which is said to characterise occasionally the Scotch sacramental fasts. But in truth it requires not only the religious training of a Spanish devotee, but that of a bygone era, to enter with any fulness into the peculiarities of the Sacramental *Autos*, but we can readily see—and this is our sole concern with them—their disastrous influence in rendering impossible any healthy growth in culture, liberty of thought, and intelligence, or even in genuine religion itself. The *Auto*, and the religious drama generally, was in point of fact the most powerful and popular teacher of papal dogma to the Spain of the thirteenth and four following centuries. It was a religious creed promulgated for the first time in the history of humanity by means of theatrical representations. It was set forth by the highest authorities, civil and ecclesiastical, before a people pre-eminently impressionable of histrionic exhibitions and sacerdotal pageantry. Its teachings were further enforced by the dread and secret tribunal of the Inquisition. Besides which the creed of the *Autos*, for so might the popular belief of Spain from the fifteenth to the eighteenth century be designated, embraced the whole circle of Romanist dogma, and therefore the whole compass of infallible truth. It left absolutely no scope for research or inquiry, no ground or justification for mental independence, no room for the exercise of the reason or intellect. It transformed men into the most abject of slaves, political and religious, and changed the religion of Christ into a horrible mixture of superstition and fanaticism, impiety and blasphemy, terrorism and cruelty. We can perceive

¹ Compare Klein, ii., p. 431. After quoting this remark of Pedroso, Klein adds: “Als ob solche Beimischung von Phantastisch-absurden Gebräuen nicht den erbaulichsten Inhalt fälschen, ja in Gift verwandeln, müsste! Als ob die Heiligkeit des Lehrbegriffs nicht eben durch solchen hirnerbrannten Beischlag befleckt und entweiht würde! Als ob die Verblendung Verwirrung und Zerrüttung des gemeinen Volksverständes durch solches Gaukelwesen des baarsten Unsinnns Licht über ein Dogmenmysterium verbreiten könnte!” See, on the character of the *Autos*, Ticknor, ii., 358-365.

after studying the *Autos* one main reason of the utter prostration of the Spanish intellect which is for many centuries the distinguishing mark of the national character. We can appreciate the immoral training of which such dramas as Lope de Vega's "San Nicolas de Tolentino" and Calderon's "La Devocion de la Cruz" are the execrable fruits. We can discern the cause of the intellectual feebleness of Calderon's "El Magico Prodigioso" and of the non-existence in Spanish literature of any work bearing on the dangerous topic of free-thought.

No doubt there is a standpoint from which the religious drama of Spain may present a glorious and magnificent splendour. Conceive Romanism as the only true embodiment of Christianity; ignore the first simple significance of the life and work of Christ; shut out of sight the primary needs and instincts of mankind; leave out of consideration such watchwords as reason, intellect, freedom, conscience; take no thought of the profound, unfathomable mysteries that underlie existence; overlook the moral and political degradation of Spain; forget the butcheries of an Alva and the cells of the Inquisition, with their thousands of tortured wretches, and, on the other hand, give full scope to a sensual devoteeism, to a meretricious ritual, to a gaudy ceremonial, invested, however, with the seductive glamour of popular enthusiasm, and we might have no insuperable difficulty in inducing something like a warm admiration for the *Auto* pageant. But regarded from the point of view of Christianity and genuine progress, and from the conviction that there are objects in the lives of individuals and of a nation compared with which the sublimest poetry, the most splendid presentation of ritual, are of infinitesimally small importance, and it seems impossible to view the tendencies and outcome of the Spanish religious drama with any other feelings than those of reprobation. As Klein and others have pointed out, the *Autos* of Lope de Vega and of Calderon grew into importance *pari passu* with the increase of despotism and intolerance on the part of Spanish rulers, and of bigotry and obscurantism on the part of the Spanish nation. Hence, whatever might be the splendour of the pageant, or the truth of the dogma-germ whose excessive development it was intended to express, or the sublimity of the poetry employed for such expression, to the philosophic thinker the display was only

like the music of the battlefield, employed to hide the groans of the wounded and dying; or the adornment with gay festoons of flowers and wreaths of evergreen of a ghastly and livid corpse. Some Protestant admirers of the religious drama of Spain, especially of its highest product, the *Autos* of Calderon, appear to have forgotten the significant fact that the legitimate outcome of the *Auto Sacramentale* was the *Auto da Fé*, sometimes indeed its actual attendant; and that the mistaken superstitious devotion kindled by the former found its own appropriate and fanatical outlet in the horrible cruelty of the latter. We must therefore conclude, taking as the basis of our estimate such things as national prosperity, religious freedom, intellectual vigour and independence, and genuine Christianity, that the effects of the religious drama of Spain were altogether mischievous. Among the more striking of the evils which followed in its wake might be enumerated these:—1. It was a powerful ally to an omnipotent, unscrupulous, and persecuting ecclesiasticism. 2. It tended to invest immoral or superstitious dogmas with a fictitious glamour of poetic idealism and imaginative beauty. 3. By making religion consist only of externality and ritual usage it helped to widen and perpetuate the existing divorce between morality and religion.¹ 4. By the buffoonery, indecency, and blasphemy which accompanied the *Auto* shows, it imported irreverence into solemn religious acts, and continued the grossness of which the old secular drama had been justly accused.² 5. By ministering to the popular passion for religious pageants it helped to divert the attention of the Spanish people from their political and religious servitude. The *Autos* thus served the same purpose as the gladiatorial shows subsidised by Julius Cæsar, or, as the foreign wars of certain European despots, they performed the degrading function of disguising from the nation its own increasing degeneracy and its abjectly servile condition.

But how great soever the extent of these mischiefs, now of many centuries' duration (for the earliest *Autos* date from the twelfth century), it is clear that the labours of Calderon added to them. In part this was the result of his superiority. His *Autos*

¹ Compare on this point Ticknor, ii., p. 263.

² Ticknor, *ut supra*, p. 250.

were much more elaborate and finished productions than those of Lope de Vega and his other predecessors. They made accordingly far greater demands on the royal purse. In point both of scenic ingenuity and cost they might be compared to Ben Jonson's Masques. But this only added to their influence, and to whatever consequences that influence was likely to entail. The pageantry which attended them, being more magnificent, was for that reason more attractive to the spectators. Moreover, Calderon's poetry had an inexpressible charm for ears attuned to its rhythm and for hearts accustomed to respond to its awakening influence. It scaled heights of idealism and sounded depths of mysticism which no prior *Auto* writer had attempted, and in this particular was altogether in harmony with the highest Spanish religious culture. It was generally recognised as superior to all other dramatic poetry in respect of imagination and versatility, grace and delicacy, tenderness and pathos, and for this reason exercised a more widely diffused sway. But of all his poetry that which stands highest in all these characteristics is that of the *Autos*.¹ The tone of these compositions is also increasingly dogmatic and ecclesiastical, as might indeed have been expected from their subjects. This dogma-growth may, moreover, be extended to the whole *Auto* literature of Spain, for whether instigated by the feeble echoes which were all the hearing Spain was privileged to enjoy of the Reformation, or whether animated by the national spirits of intolerance and exclusiveness, of which the Inquisition itself was only a symptom, it is certain that the religious drama seems to increase in dogmatic insistence and persecuting zeal throughout the fifteenth and the next two centuries. The highest point of this dogmatic evolution is attained by Calderon, whom Klein calls "*der grosse Dogmatiker der spanischen Comedia*".² So fanatical are his sentiments on the authority of the Church, so completely does he identify dissent from it with

¹ It will be remembered that in his old age Calderon "declared" to be judged only by his *Autos*, and professed indifference to his secular comedies. Compare Keil's art. "Calderon" in *Ersch und Gruber*, Sec. i., xiv; Bouterwek's *Geschichte d. Poesie*, vol. iii., 503. Calderon's own testimony on the subject may be found in La Huerta's *Theatro Hespagnol*, part ii., tom. iii.

² *Geschichte*, etc., ii., p. 291.

the grossest forms of criminality, so thoroughly in accord is he with the ferocious intolerance of his nation, that other writers have bestowed on him the ignominious title of “the poet of the Inquisition”.¹ A greater indignity than that conferred by such designation is inconceivable, but it is fully merited. Instead of employing his brilliant genius, his rare poetic powers, in the service of progress, enlightenment, and general human utility, or, where the evil propensities of his countrymen were concerned, for purposes of moderation and restraint, Calderon enhances and intensifies the worst characteristics, the most degrading vices of his nation. Spain had long been passionately dogmatic; Calderon’s labours left her more so. To her eternal reprobation, she had long since pushed religious intolerance to an extreme of cruelty which the world had never before seen. Calderon’s dramas added fuel to this infernal fire of fanaticism. Spanish religionism had long been the opprobrium of the rest of Europe; Calderon’s representation of it justified and increased its ill-fame. Whether consciously or not, he prostituted his rare gifts, his versatile imagination, his poetic art, in order to invest with a fictitious glow of beauty the most detestable principles and rules of conduct that had ever disgraced humanity. How little scope he was inclined to give to free-thought, the exercise of reason or independent judgment, is apparent in every page of his works. The duty of unquestioning faith and obedience followed, in his judgment, as a corollary from the supreme sovereignty of the Church. No virtue or excellence was possible but those begotten of ecclesiasticism; no expressed truth was admissible excepting that on which the Church had placed its *imprimatur*; no tacit opinion ever was justifiable except such as had already obtained her sanction. Uninquiring faith thereby became the highest virtue of the Christian character, abject submissiveness the chief merit of the Christian life. The extent to which Calderon carries this fanaticism can only be adequately appreciated by those who have studied with some amount of closeness his works. Sometimes he employs for the defence of the faith the most grotesquely mediæval and scholastic ratiocination. In his exuberant zeal he

¹ Compare the authorities collected by Buckle, *History of Civilisation*, vol. ii., p. 481.

not unfrequently goes even beyond the standpoint of the Church itself. Thus, in the *Auto* "Los Encantos de la Culpa," the senses are convicted of falsehood because they refuse to bear witness to the dogma of Transubstantiation, the poet disregarding the fact that the change, as described by the Church, was not held to extend beyond the invisible essence of the bread, the sensible qualities being left altogether intact.¹ The passage is further interesting as indicating Calderon's solution of the discrepancy between the testimony of the senses and the declarations of the Church. This is how "Hearing" justifies its preference for dogma as being superior to its own deliverance. Speaking of the sound of the broken bread, it says:—

- Aungue la fraccion se escucha
Ruido de Pan, cosa es clara
Que en fé de la Penitencia
A quien digo que la llaman
Carne, por Carne la creo
Pues que ella lo diga basta ;

an easy method, which Calderon has no difficulty in extending to all conceivable antagonisms to ecclesiasticism, for example, those arising from reason, experience, scripture, etc. He also transcends the ordinary standpoint of Romanism when he makes purely intellectual faculties, such as the understanding, the mere ministers of dogma, thereby ignoring, or at least diminishing, the perennial antagonism of faith and reason; or again, when he imputes an immoral or even criminal taint to the minutest deviation from Romanist belief. In this excessive religionism the *Autos* of Calderon are far in advance of his other dramas. They represent his fervid imagination taken at the point of its greatest heat, and its products deliberately cooled down into dogmas. They portray his most airy and fantastical rhetoric transmuted into logic. It is needless to point out the effect of such a method and such a creed upon questions of truth, knowledge, inquiry, reason, and morality. The domain of truth and conduct was identical with the limits of the Church, or even with the ideal amplitude he gave to these by means of his powerful imagination.

¹ It is true this argument is put forward by "Culpa" Sui, but its validity is clearly sanctioned by Sui's opponents. Compare the drama, Fitzgerald's edition, pp. 200, 201.

To question a dogma, even for mere purposes of criticism, constituted a deadly crime for which no punishment was deemed too severe; and, conversely, the performance of ritual, however mechanical, was held to outweigh any amount of ethical turpitude. A striking example of Calderon's fanaticism and of the debasing effects of Spanish Romanism when carried to its legitimate consequences is afforded by his well-known play, "*La Devocion de la Cruz*". The subject of this, the most irreligious and immoral drama that was ever composed, is thus succinctly and impartially described by Mr. Ticknor, whom we prefer to quote on the question, inasmuch as no language of ours would adequately convey the repulsiveness—the horrible moral nausea—which the play invariably excites in us. "It is founded on the adventures of a man who, though his life is a tissue of gross and atrocious crimes, is yet made an object of the especial favour of God because he shows a uniform external reverence for whatever has the form of a cross; and who dying in a drunken brawl as a robber is yet, in consequence of this devotion to the cross, miraculously restored to life that he may confess his sins, be absolved, and then be transported directly to heaven."¹ Nor is this religious fanaticism—this unqualified antinomianism—this apotheosis of immorality—the sole instance of Calderon's excess (for here, it must be remembered, we have not only the speculative exaggeration of the Romanist standpoint attained by the passion and glow of religious imagination, but a most pernicious, albeit not unique, perversion of its most authoritative teachings), but his exuberant sentiment contrives to discharge itself in other ill-considered directions. His loyalty is just as extreme, and almost just as mischievous, as his excessive religionism. Although the rulers of Spain with whom he was acquainted were not only human, but unmistakably and even degradingly so, yet all Calderon's kings are superhuman. They are represented as free from the laws and restrictions which bind ordinary men.² The power inherent in

¹ Ticknor adds: "The whole seems to be absolutely an invention of Calderon, and from the fervent poetical turn of its devotional passages it has always been a favourite in Spain, and, what is yet more remarkable, has found ardent admirers in Protestant Christendom" (vol. ii., p. 369).

² Compare von Schack, *Geschichte*, iii., p. 148.

their office is regarded as absolute and unlimited, excepting in the case of Christian kings by that of the Church. Their right to the obedience as to the lives and property of their subjects is equally indefeasible and unbounded. Never has the poet's sarcasm—

The right divine of kings to govern wrong—

been so deliberately and persistently affirmed as by the great court poet of Spain. A similar intensification of the worst passions and prejudices of his countrymen is also manifested in his treatment of the Spanish code of honour, and his exaggeration of the senseless and unchristian punctiliousness that took cognisance of minute and even imaginary infringements of that code.¹ Thus his works may justly be charged with adding fuel to the insane jealousies, the petty and undignified susceptibilities, the unworthy animosities, the ceaseless feuds, which occupy so large a place both in the history of Spain and in the private records of its principal families.² Other unworthy concessions to the puerile vanities and mischievous prepossessions of Spaniards might easily be enumerated. Our object, however, is not a general estimate of Calderon's genius and his works, as much as the influence they were calculated to exercise on free-thought, and as serving to explain the merits and defects of "*El Magico Prodigioso*". His genius, considered in itself and apart from all questions of religion, morality, national progress, and human utility, no candid critic would for a moment dream of denying. In the realm of pure religious imagination he reigns supreme, not only among the poets of his own country, but also among the poets of all countries and times, excepting a few of the very first order. In versatile fancy, artistic contrivance, emotional tenderness, he is second to none. His greatest want, as we have already remarked, is intellectuality. His compositions are well formed, but they are wholly destitute of bone, muscle, and fibre. They contain little that is calculated to appeal to men as reasoning, progressive, and enlightened beings. The poet rarely rises above the vitiated atmosphere, the perverted ideals, of convents and nunneries. His works really belong to those distant ages which are designated with equal truth as "dark" and as "full of faith". No doubt

¹ Von Schack, *loc. cit.*, pp. 149, 150.

² Compare Ticknor, ii., p. 402.

Calderon represents with the greatest possible fidelity his country and his times. What Spain was in the seventeenth century and under the dominion of the house of Austria may be seen with the greatest vividness and truth of detail in his works. His men and women are precisely those that thronged the streets of Madrid, that frequented the courts of the third and fourth Philips. This meed of praise must be fully awarded him; and if a dramatist's sole function is to represent faithfully the times, persons, and manners among whom and which he lives, then unquestionably Calderon must be held to occupy a very high position; but if a dramatist is regarded in a higher light,¹ if he is essentially the teacher of his age, if the test of his labours consists in their capacity to elevate, enlighten, and strengthen those who come under their influence, if he is indissolubly associated with the true intellectual and spiritual progress of his country, then Calderon cannot be held to occupy a high position, for his religion is either sentimental, superstitious, or immoral; his morality is weak, emasculate, and unchristian; his social and political philosophy vicious and contemptible.

That his general attitude to free-thought was one of intense hostility need not be reasserted. In point of fact we may doubt whether the baleful abstraction ever came within the limits of his earnest thought. If it did, it was as much out of the scope of his smallest sympathy as a heretic in the Church or a rebel in the

¹ This, it may be remarked, is the standpoint whence Klein in his *Geschichte* regards Calderon, and which supplies the key to his virulent and sometimes unjustifiable hostility to everything pertaining to the great dramatist. Archbishop Trench, who takes the lower ground of estimating Calderon solely on his own merits as a poet and dramatist, and apart from the influence he was calculated to exercise on the welfare of his country, has thought fit to stigmatise Klein's criticism in these terms: "His book is penetrated with the wildest, most fanatical hatred of this poet, his art, his morality, his religion, so wild that it reads often like the work of a madman" (*Essay on Genius, etc., of Calderon*, p. 75). But the archbishop has clearly failed to see, or else to appreciate Klein's position. If we imagine some Carlyle (with whom, in mental idiosyncrasy and style, Klein has considerable affinity) contemplating the benighted, priest-ridden condition of Spain for so many centuries, and, with fiery indignation, tracing those loathsome products to their source, we should find no difficulty in explaining or justifying his ethical exasperation.

state. And yet, by the mere combined influences of imagination and emotional profundity, we find that occasionally his humanity gets the better for the time of his sacerdotalism and religious bigotry. Thus in a few of his comedies he represents the Moors with much sympathetic feeling. In "La Vida es Sueno" (Sigismund's Soliloquy, act i., scene 2), he describes with genuine enthusiasm and in a strain of the loftiest poetry the natural rights of man to freedom. In his "La Aurora en Copacabana" he allows that a certain amount of dim religious feeling and aspiration is traceable in the sun-worship of the Peruvians. Sometimes, too, he enlists the sympathies of his audience for characters such as Eugénice in "El Josef de las Mujeres," of more or less questionable orthodoxy, and commends the high morality of the ancient Greeks and Romans. A still more decisive example of the same unwonted generosity is his glorification of freedom in the noble character of the Alcalde (Mayor) of Talamca, though Klein attributes this concession to free-thought to Lope de Vega, from whom Calderon borrowed the character.¹ But much stress cannot be placed on these occasional and transitory modifications of his usual intolerant and sacerdotal standpoint. They seem the effects of a sudden wayward access of human sympathy or the chance workings of a tender and wide-reaching imagination rather than the decisions of reason and deliberate conviction.

Passing on now to the "Wonder-working Magician," we find its character to be precisely that which our summary investigation of the religious drama of Spain would have led us to expect. It also manifests the distinctive qualities of Spain's greatest dramatist. It reveals in a striking manner Calderon's wealth and versatility of imagination. It shows us his luxuriant power of invention. It manifests his profound depth of sentiment, especially in connection with religion and ecclesiasticism. It proves his possession of that power, for which Goethe especially commended him, of dramatic contrivance—the adaptation to one main end of all the incidents and subordinate parts of the drama. It demon-

¹ Klein, after ranking this among the highest examples of Spanish dramatic art, adds: "dessen Grundmotiv, blitzend von kühner Geistesfreiheit, der feudalförmliche Dichter Calderon dem Genie des Lope entlehnte" (*Geschichte*, i., p. 313); so also Ticknor, ii., p. 236.

strates his mastery over the Spanish language—the noble Castilian tongue whose numberless beauties and capacities he has contributed more than any other writer to disclose. But with all these artistic and dramatic merits, there is an evident lack of intellectual power, a deficiency in the full and thorough conception of his subject. Setting out with the intention of painting the spirit that denies and doubts, Calderon has only succeeded in limning a feeble and ineffective caricature of it. His theme is that of philosophy and free-thought, his treatment of it such as might become a Romanist divine to whom freedom of any kind bears a perilous resemblance to the dreaded bugbear of heterodoxy. He essays to paint a great historical, at least powerful, subject with only half-tints on his palette, and his brush wielded by a timid and wavering hand. Excuses in abundance and possessing no small force might no doubt be alleged for him, and their validity we have already allowed. It is only great writers that rise above the level of their surroundings, and Calderon in this sense was not great. He has nothing of that Promethean fire, that glorious eccentricity, that soars above contemporaries and their works, and thinks in advance of his time. He merely represents, though with marvellous fidelity, his own environment. He is a looking-glass, not a telescope. His ideals are confined by the emasculate and tardy speculation of Spain in the seventeenth century, not by the conceivable or probable thought of advanced Europeans in the twentieth century. Hence, compared with the Prometheus of Aeschylus, the Job of the Hebrew Scriptures, the Faust of Goethe, the conception of Calderon takes a very inferior place. It has nothing of the sublimity, the moral grandeur, and the magnificent self-assertion which elevate the opposition of Prometheus to Zeus, and of Job to Jahve, to a religious and ethical duty. It has nothing of the profound restlessness, the searching investigation after truth, the defiant spirit of a Faust. We become conscious on reading it how inferior an arena for the exercise of the highest human faculties was supplied by Spanish Romanism compared with the old Hellenic mythology, within which moved the thought and fancy of Aeschylus, or the primitive cult which afforded aliment to the intellect of Job, not to mention the free Protestantism which lives in the pages of Goethe's "Faust". We are also made aware of the enfeebling, one-sided culture which

must inevitably result from every system of excessive sacerdotalism. Within his own province of narrow ecclesiasticism, Calderon is supreme and unapproachable. Religion supplies the framework and the nurture of his imagination. Religion constitutes the warp and woof of his morality. He has no other standard for estimating historical events, political movements, or any other among the multifarious elements of human and mundane interests. His universe is the interior of some Gothic cathedral, lofty and imposing, but withal dim and artificial. It is not Nature's diversified expanse of land and sea, broad plains and narrow ravines, rocks and woods, grassy meads and glowing streams. It may be granted that his imagination thrives on its ecclesiastical diet. This is at once seen by those who compare the *Autos* of his later days with the comedies that for the most part preceded them. But this upwardness is attained at the cost of breadth and vigour, like the exceptional growth of some young people who attain a lofty stature at the expense of shapeliness and robustness. Compared with Goethe and Shakespeare, Calderon is like a poplar, tall, graceful, and slender, shooting its pointed spire to heaven, and looking down from this sublime elevation with haughty and austere glance on things of earth; while his poetical brethren resemble the full-grown flourishing oak, with its massive and gnarled trunk, its branches extending far in every direction, exposing much surface of greenery heavenward, but at the same time benignantly shading the landscape it adorns. If it be contended that each has its own special beauty, that each follows its nature-implanted tendency, this may be allowed, but there can be little comparison between them in point of strength, majesty, and genuine utility to mankind.

The plot of "*El Magico Prodigioso*" resembles that of the book of Job and the "*Faust*" of Goethe. It consists in the efforts of the evil one to pervert a young scholar who is dissatisfied with paganism and is tempted to embrace Christianity. The story in its main features is taken from early Christian legends,¹ and its events are represented as having taken place in

¹ On the sources of the legend compare von Schack, ii., 119, note 41; Klein, iv., part ii., p. 404, note 1; and see especially M. Morel-Fatio's edition of "*El Magico Prodigioso*," Intro., p. xxviii., etc. This author points out that there are three different versions or stages of the legend. That

the time of the Emperor Decius. It presents Christianity in its primary conflict with heathendom, though it is far from proving that Calderon had a profound or critical sense of the antagonism. Indeed, it is noteworthy that while Calderon, the poet, has brought before him the relation of Papal Christianity to Judaism, Mahometanism, and Protestantism, all of them being forces operating more or less vigorously around him, he seeks his type of anti-Christianity in the extinct Paganism of the later Roman Empire. Few facts reveal more clearly his defective intellectualism and his mental aloofness from the deeper problems relating to Christianity. His sole conception of free-thought and of the adverse influences that assailed the Church was fifteen centuries old, for it is not only in “*El Magico Prodigioso*” that we find this representation of anti-Christianity; we have the same contrast of Pagan and Christian beliefs in others of his dramas, and especially in “*El Josef de las Mujeres*”. That the position of Christianity and its Papal development had become changed by history and by the onward march of events was a thought that never seems to have occurred to him. That free speculation might in the seventeenth century have a larger scope and a more important rôle than in the third was an idea foreign to his mind. That doubt, suspense, inquiry of a much profounder kind than that of his hero were operative and effective influences in his own time was a truth which, if it occurred to him, exercised no real power over himself or his works. Incidentally, he seems to admit that mental growth might induce changes in human belief, that increase of knowledge might result in increase of doubt; he is at least aware of that as a mental condition of restless thinkers.

which Calderon seems to have followed is that of Simeon Metaphrastus, which pertains to the tenth century, but which was translated into Latin in the sixteenth century, by Lipomanus, Bishop of Verona. The chief points of contact between the old legend and Calderon’s play are thus given in this Latin version:—“*Cyprianus quidem versabatur Antiochiæ quo tempore Imperii sceptrâ tenebat Decius . . . parentes autem genere clari et divites; dabat vero operam philosophiæ et arti magicæ. Cum in eas ab incunte ætate studium posuisset, ad summum pervenit utriusque, cum simul et diligentiam et acutissimum attulisset ingenium . . . insignem quoque Antiochiam voluit habere testem suæ sapientiæ, et in magicis rebus eruditionis, forsân fore quoque exspectans, ut ibi aliquid disceret quod non ad hoc usque tempus didicerat.*”

Similarly, in his "La Estatua de Promoteo" he appears to imply that discord may follow human reason as an unavoidable consequent, but these admissions are no more than the commonplaces of a theologian who regards uninquiring credulity as a cure for all mental ailments. Certainly there is nothing in his writings to warrant the supposition that he regarded inquiry and suspense as in any case justifiable conditions of the human intellect; for when he treats of dissent from Romanism, under the names of heresy, doubt, etc., in his *Autos*, it is always regarded from the Inquisition standpoint of a deadly crime, placed on an equality with extreme forms of vice, and evidently considered as a wilful and malignant perversity deserving extremest punishment.¹

In respect, then, of scope and profundity Calderon's skeptic is far inferior even to Job, while he is removed by an immeasurable interval from the creation of Goethe. He is discovered in the opening scene seated in a romantic wood in the neighbourhood of Antioch, and surrounded by books. Contrasted with the student's cell of Faust, with its Gothic architecture, its stone-arched roof, narrow windows, and gloomy interior, the difference of locality seems typical of corresponding distinctions in the general intellectual reach and depth of research on the part of the two students. Cyprian's doubts are hardly more than the artificial darkness of some bosky thicket, or the transient obscura-

¹ The drama of all others which illustrates the position of doubt or mistrust in relation to the depraved religionism of Spain is Tirso de Molina's "El Condenado por desconfiado," a work which von Schack pronounces the most important among all the religious plays of Spain, and says that it bears impressed upon it in flaming characters the monstrous, and by us scarcely comprehensible, spirit of the religionism of that period. Compare his analysis of the play, *Geschichte*, etc., ii., 602-604. The plot is thus summarised by Ticknor, vol. ii., p. 369, note 49, who compares it with the "Devocion de la Cruz," which "it preceded in time and, perhaps, surpasses in poetical merit". He says—"It represents a reverend hermit, Paulo, as losing the favour of God simply from want of trust in it; while Enrico, a robber and assassin, obtains that favour by an exercise of faith and trust at the last moment of a life which had been filled with the most revolting crimes". A more diabolical perversion of all that is noble and holy in religion it would be utterly impossible to conceive. An Atheism which inculcated moral duties would be infinitely preferable to a theology based on such horrible principles.

tions of the sun by passing clouds. Faust's are penetrating and profound, piercing far down into the elemental darkness and chaos on which existence is based. Cyprian, who is attended, after the manner of the students of Salamanca, by two *famuli* or servitors,¹ the *graciosi* or buffoons of the play, explains his object in coming to this spot for study. The citizens of the neighbouring town of Antioch have just completed a temple to Jupiter, and have appointed this day for its dedication and the festivities customarily attending such an event. Animated by the student's love of solitude, Cyprian seeks a retirement from the bustle and confusion of such a scene. He therefore takes his books and determines to spend the day in the green seclusion of a wood, while his two servants are eagerly preparing to join the festivities in Antioch. As we have already observed, Cyprian is a heathen, with the ideas and culture of an intelligent Roman about the middle of the third century A.D. Professedly he is a believer in Jupiter, though it is probable that in making him prefer a speculative inquiry into the nature of the gods to an unquestioning participation in their feasts Calderon intended to insinuate that doubt in respect to the being and attributes of God had already taken possession of his mind. After Cyprian has announced his intention of spending the festival day in study, his two attendants engage in some quasi-humorous altercation which calls forth their master's rebuke. He ascribes their confidence in hostile discussion to their ignorance:—

¡ Que siempre los dos
Habeis con vuestra ygnorancia
De estar porfiando y tornando
Uno de otro la contraria !

One incident of their antagonism, and that on which the humour of the play—often forced and misplaced—is made to hinge, consists in their being both enamoured of Livia, the servant of Justicia, the heroine of the drama.

When his servants have started on their holiday Cyprian opens his books and composes himself to their study. To use his own words (we adopt Mr. Fitzgerald's translation) :—

¹ Compare M. Morel-Fatio's edition, p. 242.

Now I am alone, and may,
 If my mind can be so lifted,
 Study the great problem which
 Keeps my soul disturbed, bewildered,
 Since I read in Pliny's page
 The mysterious words there written,
 Which define a god ; because
 It doth seem beyond the limits
 Of my intellect to find
 One who all these signs exhibits.
 This mysterious hidden truth
 Must I seek for.
 (Esta verdad escondida
 E de apurar.)

We have here revealed the nature and extent of Cyprian's doubt—the extreme depth of his skepticism. His attention has been arrested by a remarkable definition of Deity suggested by Pliny in his *Natural History*,¹ and his mind is exercised by the palpable antagonism between that definition and the mythological ideas of the gods in which he has been brought up. His resolution to explore the matter has the effect of conjuring up the Devil, though why it should have produced that result is not easy to determine except on the supposition that Calderon deemed every kind of truth-search diabolical. The Demon, as he is called, issues from a neighbouring thicket clad in a holiday dress, and announces *sotto voce* that Cyprian's proposed search will be unsuccessful since he purposes to hide its issue from him. Hearing the rustle in the bushes near him, Cyprian asks, "Who is there?" Whereupon the Demon presents himself to his full view and relates that he is a stranger who has lost his way in the woods, being bound to Antioch on business of importance. Cyprian expresses his natural surprise that he should have lost himself within sight of the lofty towers of Antioch, and in a neighbourhood where every road and every path converged on that city, to which the Demon cynically replies that it is an example of the ignorance which, in the very presence of knowledge, fails to apprehend it—

¹ Lib. ii., ch. vii. "Quapropter effigiem dei formamque quærere imbecillitatis humanæ reor. Quisquis est deus, si modo est alius (*i.e.*, quam Sol), et quacumque in parte, totus est sensus, totus visus totus auditus, totus animæ, totus animi, totus sui."

. . . Esa es la ygnorancia
A la vista de las ciencias
No saber aprobecharlas—

a description of a nescience or skepticism arising from too much light which is certainly found to exist in minds peculiarly trained and constituted,¹ but which Calderon probably intended to refer to the nescience of dull apathetic ignorance; that, for example, which Aeschylus attributes to men before they were enlightened by Prometheus:—

They first, indeed, though seeing, saw in vain,
Though hearing, still were deaf.²

Proceeding in his self-explanation, the Demon suggests a postponement of his arrival at Antioch, and expresses a wish to stay and have some learned discussion with Cyprian. He avows that his instincts always attract him “unto men to books addicted,” so that he shares the sympathies of the “fahrender Scolast” whose garb and bearing Mephistopheles assumes in Goethe’s drama. The discussion thereupon commences:—

Cypr. Have you been a student?

Dem. No!

But I know what may suffice me
Not to be held ignorant.³

Cypr. Then, what science know you?

Dem. Many.

Cypr. We cannot, though studying one
Many years, e’er gain its knowledge.
And can you (O, portent rare!)
Without study know so many?⁴

¹ Compare the author’s *Evenings with the Skeptics*, vol. ii., p. 36.

² Compare preceding Essay on “Prometheus,” p. 74. Shelley in his paraphrase of the Demon’s words, has well described this kind of ignorance:—

“And such is ignorance! Even in the sight
Of knowledge, it can draw no profit from it.”

³ “. . . No;

Pero sé lo que me basta
Para no ser ygnorante.”

Among the minor resemblances between Calderon’s and Goethe’s drama may be noted the nearly *ipsissima verba* of Mephistopheles:—

“Allwissend bin ich nicht; doch viel ist mir bewusst”.

⁴ It may be observed that the text generally followed in these translations, except where Mr. Fitzgerald is quoted, is the more ancient one of M. Morel-Fatio’s work, above quoted.

Dem. Yes, since I am of a country
Where the loftiest kinds of science
Without study may be known.

Cypr. Would I too were of that country.
Here, alas! the more one studies
Still more does he doubt.
(Que aca, micutras mas se estudia
Mas se duda.)

Dem. So true
Is this, that without study
I had the superb ambition
For the first professor's chair
To compete, and meant to win it,
Having many votes on my side;
And although I failed, sufficient
Glory is it to have tried,
For not always to the winner
Is the fame, etc., etc.

We have here one of those rare instances in which the Demon of Calderon approaches the Mephistopheles of Faust. The representation of the archangelic insurrection as a contest for the first professor's chair, as if the event had recently occurred in a Spanish university, is a genuine stroke of humour not unmingled with the cynical raillery with which Mephistopheles adverts to the same unfortunate episode in his career. The Demon then asks Cyprian to propound (after the manner of mediæval universities) some scholastic theme for discussion, professing his readiness to take the contrary side to Cyprian's whatever the question propounded might be. The young student is gratified with the proposal, and forthwith mentions the definition (already alluded to in his soliloquy) which Pliny gives of Deity, and on which his mind has been sorely exercised. The Demon, by some occult process, knows the passage:—

'Tis that passage which declares,
Well I recollect it, this:—
God is our supremest good,
One sole cause and one pure essence,
Wholly sight and wholly action.
(Todo vista y todo manos.)

Cyprian confesses his inability to harmonise this ideal description with the popular character of Jupiter, of which goodness and

purity could scarcely be said to be conspicuous features. He instances the stories of Danae and Europa as justifying his puzzlement.¹ But the Demon, who, according to the argument, has to defend Polytheism from the doubts of its hesitating disciple, replies that these traditions are fabulous, and that under the names of the heathen deities was veiled a secret system of moral philosophy. The passage is interesting in its bearing on Calderon, inasmuch as it gives the key to his invariable method of not only Christianising but Romanising the old Pagan mythology.

Esas son falsas ystorias
En que las letras profanas,
Con los nombres de los dioses,
Entendieron disfraçada
La moral filosofia.

Cyprian does not think the answer sufficient, since such reverence is due to God that no one ought to ascribe to him sins even though they might be fictitious. Besides, if the gods are to will always what is good, their wills should be in unison, whereas nothing can be more contradictory than the oracular responses the different deities give to their supplicants. The Demon's reply is precisely that which an orthodox Christian theologian would make to difficulties in the interpretation of Providence. He suggests that these answers may be given

By the deities for ends
Which our intellectual insight
Cannot fathom.

Thus a defeat in battle might conceivably be more gainful than a victory. This Cyprian grants, but adds that in such a case the gods should not have promised victory to the defeated. They might either have permitted the defeat tacitly or made the false promise of victory by the medium of other agencies, such as genii, etc.² The Demon, who appears for the time to be playing the

¹ See the same argument in Calderon's "*El Josef de las Mujeres*" (Hartzenbusch's edition, iii., p. 358).

² This permission to the deity of vicarious unverity is evidently intended by Calderon to be taken in a serious light, for it occurs in this and similar forms in others of his works. It would, however, be unjust to blame him for adopting a principle which is by no means yet extinct in Protestant theology.

part of a divine of the evidential school, then proceeds to point out other proofs of united action on the part of the gods. The human frame, for example, reveals, notwithstanding its various parts and functions, one single and uniform conception. Cyprian, however, insists that various deities, each possessing distinct personality but all being co-equal in power, must needs involve diverse volitions and clashing activities. To which the Demon answers that there can be no argument on false issues, and asks what Cyprian's conclusion is, supposing him to concede his premisses, which he seems inclined to do. It must be admitted that Calderon's Demon is, notwithstanding his ill-sounding name, rather an amiable personage, with no intellectual power or controversial ability worth mentioning. The fight that he makes for Polytheism is of the feeblest description; and if the Polytheists of the third century had not been more efficiently equipped than their diabolic representative in the seventeenth, Christianity would have achieved a much completer and speedier triumph than that which actually fell to her lot. Cyprian replies to the Demon's invitation by propounding the conception of Deity which appears to him to come from Pliny's definition, and to harmonise best with the facts of the universe. We must conclude, he says, that there must be (I again quote Mr. Fitzgerald)

One sole God, all hands, all vision,
 Good supreme, supreme in grace,
 One who cannot err, omniscient,
 One the highest, none can equal,
 Not beginning, yet beginner,
 One pure essence, one sole substance,
 One wise worker, one sole willer.
 And though he in one or two
 Or more persons be distinguished,
 Yet the sovereign Deity
 Must be one sublime and single,
 The first cause of every cause,
 The first germ of all existence.

It would be difficult to devise, even from the standpoint of developed Christianity, a definition of Deity more complete or more orthodox. Indeed, its harmony with ecclesiastical dogma is a little too obtrusive, for it is quite impossible to conceive that Cyprian with Pliny for his guide should have had any conception of the

doctrine of the Trinity, or, assuming him to have had such a conception, it hardly redounds to his perspicacity that he should have failed to recognise the advantage which that dogma afforded to those who attacked Christianity from the standpoint of Polytheism. But this kind of incongruity is common with Calderon, who readily sacrifices chronological probability and dramatic fitness to his overpowering sense of ecclesiastical dogma. The Demon here, as elsewhere, is confounded by the smallest presentation of any portion of the Church's creed and incontinently throws down his arms. Admitting Cyprian's wit to be keener than his own, he says that though not lacking a reply to his argument he is content for the time being to restrain it, because he hears approaching footsteps. He then parts from Cyprian with the muttered resolution that as he cannot overcome him in intellectual contention, he will try the effects of sensual passion. He has already obtained leave to kindle his lustful fires in the breast of Justina—the Christian maiden—of whom we now hear for the first time.¹ So that by involving Cyprian in the same storm of passion he hopes to achieve two conquests and attain a twofold vengeance.

The approaching steps of which the Demon takes advantage to close his discussion with Cyprian, are those of Lelius and Florus, who come to this sequestered spot to fight a duel about Justina, of whom both are deeply enamoured. Cyprian, with the help of his servants, who have returned from their festivity, prevents the encounter, and pledges himself to reconcile the lovers by ascertaining from Justina herself which of the two she prefers.

We are shortly after (scene vii.) introduced to Justina and her supposed father, Lysander. She has witnessed the festivities in connection with the new temple and image of Jupiter, and, as becomes an enthusiastic Christian virgin, she is horrified. She addresses her (supposed) father:—

Consolation, sir, is vain
After what I've seen to-day—
The whole city madly gay,
Error-blinded and insane,

¹ The love of Cyprian for Justina forms a part of the old legends whence Calderon drew his materials. Compare on this point M. Morel-Fatio, *op. cit.*, Intro., p. xxxv.

Consecrating shrine and fane
To an image which I know
Cannot be a God, although
Some demoniac power may pass,
Making breathe the silent brass
As a proof that it is so.¹

In the colloquy that follows, Lysander relates the history of Justina's birth. She is not his daughter, though she has always passed as such. She is the daughter of an unknown Christian martyr who was murdered by her pagan lover in order to escape the infamy of being put to death by the public executioner. Lysander, happening to be near when the foul deed was perpetrated, rescued her new-born child, and brought her up in the Christian faith as his own. He also takes the opportunity of recounting his own history and how he was secretly ordained by the then Pope a priest of the Christian Church. The narrative of Justina's wondrous birth is still proceeding when it is interrupted by Livia, Justina's servant, announcing the arrival of a tradesman to whom Lysander, who is exceedingly poor, owes money. During his absence to confer with his creditor, Cyprian appears in order to fulfil his self-imposed mission of ascertaining Justina's inclination with regard to her lovers. As might be foreseen, while urging the claims of Lelius and Florus, he himself falls a prey to the beauty of the Christian virgin, and the interview ends by a decisive rejection of the claims both of Lelius and Florus, and by a rejection, somewhat less decisive, of the new-born love he himself has proffered for her acceptance.

Having thus brought the lovers together, the Demon in the next stage of the tragedy attempts to destroy the fair fame of Justina by presenting himself at her window by night, and while descending from thence by a ladder contrives to be seen by both Lelius and Florus, who, unseen of each other, are watching before the house. Each thinks the other the favoured lover (for the Demon disappears in the earth), and draws his sword in order to discover his unknown and apparently successful rival, when Cyprian again appears and separates the antagonists. He is also somewhat moved by jealousy when he hears of the apparition

¹ Fitzgerald's translation, p. 140. In the older text edited by M. Morel-Fatio, Justina's address is more vehement and prolonged.

seen to descend from Justina's room, but is inclined to believe it an ocular delusion. Recognising the probability of his rivals now desisting from their pursuit of Justina, he determines to prosecute his own suit with additional ardour. Accordingly he bids his servants provide for him a rich court suit with sword and feathers, etc. Books and studies have, he adds, lost all their former fascination for him:—

Now no longer
Books or studies do I care for,
Since, they say, it is love's way
All one's intellect to slay.¹

(y ya
Ni libros ni estudios quiero
Porque digan que es amor
Omicida del ynjenio.)

Meeting Justina shortly after in the street, Cyprian takes the opportunity of declaring his passion, but with no other result than the ominous avowal that it is quite impossible she should love him except in death:—

Porque es mi rigor de suerte
De suerte mis males fieros
Que es ymposible quereros
Cipriano, hasta la muerte.

He is however satisfied, and says that death is welcome since it is the condition of her love. But this acquiescence in his fate is not very lasting. A little further on the drama represents him

¹ Carl Immermann in his *Memorabilien* (part ii.), in order to account for Cyprian's transmutation from a studious philosopher to a Don Juan, has propounded the astounding thesis that “passionate search for truth reduces its possessor to a moral condition which allows vague aspirations and sensual desires to insinuate themselves with the greatest readiness into his mind”. A more curious and ungrounded accusation against “Divine Philosophy” was never formulated. Sooth to say, the transmutation of Cyprian is a facile transition from one superficial condition to another. A shallow enthusiast in speculation is metamorphosed into an enthusiast in sensuality. The transmutation from profound thought and earnest truth-search to inordinate and unscrupulous lust, which we have in the case of Faust (and which possibly suggested to Immermann his paradox), is so far from being a natural or easy transition, that it is absolutely opposed to all human experience as well as to the elementary principles of Psychology. Compare preceding Essay on “Faust,” p. 262.

in a half-delirious access of passion, during which he declares in a passionate soliloquy that to possess Justina he would willingly barter his soul to the powers of hell. No sooner is the vow made than it meets, as in all the Faustian legends, due diabolical response. From behind the scenes comes immediately, though unheard by Cyprian, the Demon's reply, "I accept it". The infernal compact thus initiated is accompanied by terrible portents. Cyprian beholds the sudden gathering and making of what seems to him a terrific thunder-storm. Standing on the seashore, he sees the waves (the sea being hid from the spectators) violently agitated. The horizon glows like a gigantic volcano in active eruption. The sun seems dead, the air is changed to smoke, and the sky appears on fire. Presently on the storm-tossed waves comes in sight a ship. She seems driven by degrees on a rock. Then is heard the cry of drowning men, "We sink!" "We're lost!" Out of all this commotion presently emerges, like a shipwrecked sailor dripping with wet, the Demon, who now enters, and in a stage whisper utters his intentions with respect to Cyprian:—

For the end I mean to gain
 It behoved me thus to feign,
 On the ocean's sapphire face
 Portents horrible to trace,
 And in form to that of yore
 Quite unlike—which I then wore,
 When, with wonder here I found
 His wit mine did quite confound,
 (Quando en este monte yo
 Miré mi ciencia vencida,)
 Him again I come to try,
 This time feeling sure that I
 Shall at length the victor prove
 Of his intellect and his love.

In the course of the ensuing colloquy the Demon gives, at Cyprian's request, an outline of his past history. He first represents himself as a cast-off favourite of a mighty king; secondly, as a pirate, in which capacity he has just suffered shipwreck; thirdly, as a magician who has power to chain up three out of the four winds. He requests Cyprian's assistance, and promises to reward it. (I here quote Mr. Fitzgerald, whose imitation of the Spanish *Asouantes* is generally very successful.)

And I wish the good I purchase
To repay thee with the product
Of unnumbered years of study,
Giving to your wildest wishes
(*Aside, Here I touch his love*) the fondest
Longings of your heart, whatever
Passion can desire or covet.

Cyprian is overjoyed at discovering a magician so powerful, and without hesitation concludes with him a league of friendship. He receives him into his house as an honoured guest notwithstanding the strong sulphurous odour proceeding from him, for which Cyprian's servants facetiously account by suggesting that he either uses bad pastiles or else employs sulphur ointment for the itch.

Meanwhile Lelius seeks an interview with Justina, which is, however, disturbed by interruptions of various kinds; first by the Demon, who personates a stranger as if seen by Lelius in the act of quitting the maiden's chamber; then by Lysander, who arrives with terror-stricken face to announce the promulgation of a decree of Decius commanding the persecution of the Christians; next by Florus, desiring an interview with Justina on his own behalf; lastly by the Governor of Antioch (and father of Lelius), with his attendants. The embroglio caused by all these personages terminates—1. In the committal to prison of Lelius and Florus, who are discovered in the act of fighting. 2. In the awakening of the Governor's suspicions respecting Lysander and Justina as being secretly Christians. And 3. In exciting the suspicion of Lysander himself that neither Justina's Christianity nor her moral purity is what he had supposed. Being thus cast off from the sympathy of her putative father and only friend, Justina is rendered fitter for the Demon's subsequent machinations.

The play now returns to Cyprian and his Demon guest. The latter taking occasion to rally his host on his sad demeanour, Cyprian accounts for and attempts to justify it by his hopeless love for Justina and by her own transcendent merits. The confession evokes some demoniac sneers, which are however feeble compared with the asides of Goethe's Mephistopheles when he has entangled Faust in a similar network of passion. Once more, but this time more explicitly, Cyprian makes the offer:—

I have said, and now I say,
 Freely would I make away
 To some hellish power my soul
 (Love being hence my sole control)
 Who would promise to assuage
 With content fierce passion's rage.
 But my challenge is in vain,
 Priceless is what I would gain,
 And my soul were but short measure
 When exchanged for such a treasure.

The Demon accepts the offer, but not so much in his own infernal personality as in his character of an all-powerful magician. At first Cyprian is inclined to doubt the power of magic to compel Justina to his will :—

For never
 Conjurings or divinations
 Can free-will e'er overmaster.
 (Pues hallo
 Que para el libre albedrio
 Ni ay conjuros, ni ay encantos.)

This scruple is, however, silenced by an exhibition, already prepared by the Demon, of his magical power. The conversation takes place in a hall in Cyprian's house. At the end of it is an open gallery through which is seen the country beyond. The Demon asks Cyprian what he considers the pleasantest feature of the landscape before him. Cyprian replies :—

The mountain, since it is, in fact,
 Of my loved one the sweet likeness.

Whereupon the Demon by his incantations causes the mountain to move to the other side of the scene, and from thence back to its original position. He next exhibits another proof of his power which forcibly resembles the manifestations of infernal skill on the part of Mephistopheles in "Faust". The Demon causes a rock to open, and within it Justina is seen, apparently asleep. Cyprian is abundantly satisfied with such a demonstration of the power of magic, and agrees to grant whatever the Demon may ask. Then follows the usual dramatic sealing of the compact as it is found in all the Faustian legends.¹ Cyprian says :—

¹ It has often been observed that this kind of diabolical compact is quite an anachronism in the third century. There is no example of such

Pluma sera este puñal
Papel este lienço blanco
Y tinta para escribirlo
La sangre ya de mis braços.

He has sold his soul to the evil one for the possession of Justina, and ratified the infernal transaction with his own blood. But the bargain does not bind the Demon to hand over Justina to her lover's will. It merely stipulates that he must teach Cyprian so much of his magical power as will enable him to accomplish all he wishes. To effect this, he proposes that Cyprian and himself are to live together in a cave for twelve months, where they may pursue their studies without interruption. Cyprian for his part is eager to begin. He anticipates victory, not only for his love but for his intellect:—

Vamos
Que con tal maestro mi ynjenio
Mi amor con dueño tan alto
Eterno sera en el mundo
El Majico Cipriano.

The next act carries us onward to the day when the stipulated twelve months are ended. Cyprian comes forth from the cave and begins to practise his magical arts, which he boasts are now equal to his teacher's, on the outer world. Satisfied with their power in this direction, he wishes to employ them to force Justina to his will. Preparations, with the same object, are also made by the Demon, who invokes the infernal abyss (I here again avail myself of Mr. Fitzgerald's masterly translation ¹):—

a legend before the middle of the thirteenth century. But this, after all, is a small anachronism in comparison with others found in Calderon's dramas. Compare on this point, von Schack, ii., p. 102; Ticknor, ii., p. 375.

¹ Shelley's rendering of this Satanic incantation, though full of poetic beauties expressed in his own inimitable language, is much more a free paraphrase than an accurate translation. Indeed, we might say of all his renderings from Calderon that he has not so much translated his language as his conceptions. He has reinvested Calderon's personages and ideas with a new and intellectual beauty, which in their original form they are far from possessing. Those who compare Mr. Fitzgerald's accurate translation with the following lines will be able to see how the Spanish poet has been Shelley-ised by his English admirer:—

Abyss of hell, prepare!
 Thyself the region of thine own despair—
 From out each dungeon's dark recess
 Let loose the spirits of voluptuousness
 To ruin and o'erthrow
 Justina's virgin fabric, pure as snow;
 A thousand filthy phantoms with thee brought,
 So people her chaste thought
 That all her maiden fancies may be filled
 With their deceits. Let sweetest notes be trilled
 From every tuneful grove,
 And all birds, plants and flowers, provoke to love.

A scene of great tenderness and poetic beauty follows, in which Justina is represented as contending with the varied magic influences brought to bear upon her. The Demon-spell makes the blood circulate more warmly through her veins. She notes the various lessons of love indicated in nature, its suggestions in the enamoured tones of the nightingale's song, in the warm clasp of vine-tendrils, in the wistful sunward movement of the sunflower. She is alarmed at the rapidly growing power of the new-born passion, whose intrusion she is the more inclined to resent for the reason that she has hitherto prided herself on her power to spurn it. The thought naturally recalls her lovers, and the name of Cyprian seems to exercise a more potent influence than it formerly used to do. She now admits a feeling, if not of love, at least of pity for him:—

Ah! I know not what I feel,
 Pity it must surely be,
 That a man so widely known
 Should through love of me be lost,
 When he pays at such a cost
 For the preference he has shown.

"Abyss of hell! I call on thee,
 Thou wild misrule of thine own anarchy!
 From thy prison house set free
 The spirits of voluptuous death,
 That with their mighty breath
 They may destroy a world of virgin thoughts.
 Let her chaste mind with fancies thick as motes
 Be peopled from thy shadowy deep,
 Till her guiltless phantasy
 Full to overflowing be!"

Animated by this sentiment, which exercises a gradually increasing power over her, combined with the recognition of her deserted and forlorn condition, she at last utters the hesitating but bodeful wish for which the Demon has been lying in wait. Addressing her rebellious thoughts, she says :—

Still your promptings press me so
That I feel in my despair
Where he is if I could know
I to seek him now would go.

No sooner has the reluctant desire found utterance than the Demon is present with his offer of advancing it and bringing her to Cyprian. But Justina rejects his offer. He endeavours to move her by reminding her of her own desire, and by the suggestion that the sin meditated is not less than that accomplished. But the sophism is powerless. As she rightly remarks, her thought is not always in her power but her action is. Besides which she boasts a spell against which his magical art and subtle temptations are powerless. That is none other than her own free-will.¹ The passage is worth quoting :—

Justina. Sabiendome yo ayudar
Del libre alvedrio mio.
Demon. Forçarále mi pesar.
Justina. No fuera libre alvedrio
Si se dexara forçar.

Thereupon the Demon attempts to drag her, but is utterly vanquished by her persistent resistance and her Christian trust in God.

A like failure attends the magical arts of Cyprian, which he

¹ Calderon here, as always, takes on the subject of grace and free-will the side of the Jesuits against the Protestants and Theorists. It may be noted as an incidental point of connection between the “Wonder-working Magician” and the “Prometheus,” that in both the power of self-consciousness, the inherent autonomy of the will, is asserted against an over-mastering domination from without—in the case of Prometheus it is asserted against Zeus, the monopolist of all freedom (no one is free excepting Zeus); in the case of Cyprian and Justina it is asserted against a supposed omnipotence of evil, and as superior to a coercive fatalist theory of grace. For once Calderon touches one main source of freedom, though it is certain he had no idea of its extreme importance or of its numberless applications.

also discovers are powerless to bring Justina to his arms. Thus the compact existing between them seems in danger of being annulled. To prevent which failure the Demon adopts another plan, with the execution of which he has already threatened Justina, as tending to tarnish her fair fame. He prepares a phantom Justina who appears responsive to his wishes. Cyprian now believes himself in full possession of his long-coveted treasure. He clasps what he supposes to be his fair mistress in his arms and carries her into the recesses of a wood. Then, removing the cloak with which she is closely veiled, he discovers to his horror a skeleton. Its hollow eyes and fleshless visage grin a cold and bitter mockery of his passion, while from its mouth seems to proceed the words:—

Cyprian, such are all the glories
Of the world on which thy store is.¹

As might be supposed, Cyprian is by no means inclined to accept this mocking phantom in lieu of the mistress whom he has purchased at such a high price, and accordingly requests the Demon to dissolve the bargain. The latter adopts every possible means of avoiding such a contingency, but Cyprian holds him to his pledge. At last, and partly by means of these very magical arts he has himself taught Cyprian, the Demon is forced to admit his defeat. Tremblingly, he confesses that Justina's God is superior to himself and all his devices. The admission suggests to Cyprian

¹ The personation of Justina by the devil forms one of the features of the original legend as it is found in the "Legenda Aurea". There it is related that, unable to bear Cyprian's reiterated and jubilant invocation of Justina's name, the devil vanished in smoke. Compare M. Morel-Fatio's Introduction, *op. cit.*, p. 37. At the same time it must be admitted that this sudden metamorphosis of a fair woman into a skeleton forms a part of other ecclesiastical legends. M. Philarrète Charles has observed of it: "Ce terrible enseignement du squelette, remplaçant tout-à-coup, dans un rendez-vous d'amour, une femme adorée, est indiqué par plusieurs légendes chrétiennes. On peut le considérer comme le résumé le plus complet de la théorie spiritualiste que le catholicisme professe; Caldéron l'a employé plusieurs fois dans ses drames. La scène Espagnole est la seule de l'Europe, qui ait souffert et applaudi un symbole aussi redoutable" (*Études sur l'Espagne*, p. 72). Klein has humorously applied to the incident the proverbial phrase "*tarde venientibus ossa*".

an answer to his former doubts on the subject of the Deity. Unwittingly, the Demon has presented Cyprian with a satisfactory illustration, as well as demonstration, of that very definition of God given by Pliny which once formed the theme of their discussion. Justina's God, the God of the Christians, is triumphantly shown to be superior to all other Gods and powers of whatever kind. He is the supreme will to which all others are subordinate. He must also be sovereign goodness as well as all sight, all hands. Cyprian, having thus discovered the object of his long search, purposes to transfer his allegiance from the Demon to Justina's God. But his present master objects. He points out that Cyprian has bartered his soul, and he has the blood-signed scroll in his possession. In the struggle that ensues, the Demon threatens Cyprian with physical violence and death, but he escapes by invoking the God of the Christians.

The play, now approaching its conclusion, turns to the persecution of the Christians, in obedience to the rescript of Decius. Lysander and Justina are both taken prisoners, and as the reward of their capture, Lelius and Florus are delivered from prison. Cyprian next appears in the guise of an enthusiast, and relating how he has been converted, makes open profession of Christianity, announces that he has been baptised, and expresses his readiness to die a martyr's death. He is immediately seized by the pagan persecutors and conveyed to prison. As it happens, he is placed in the same cell with Justina. To her he recounts his whole history, narrates his compact with the Demon, points out how he, as well as herself, has been preserved from the malign operation of his infernal arts. He lays especial stress on his ill-omened bargain as the greatest sin of his life, and doubts whether heaven will pardon such a heinous transgression. Justina consoles her lover, tells him that the divine love for the sincere penitent is infinite, and Cyprian yields his full assent to her gentle teaching. She also reminds him of her promise to love him in death.

In the last scene of the play Cyprian and Justina are brought forth to die a martyr's death. Their execution is accompanied by a terrific storm of wind, with thunder and lightning. The scene represents a scaffold, on which are visible the bodies and severed heads of Cyprian and Justina, while hovering over it appears the Demon mounted on a dragon. He expatiates in a

very undemoniac strain¹ on the catastrophe, points out the nature of his machinations against Cyprian and Justina, and ingenuously admits them to have been altogether defeated by the constancy of the martyr-lovers. He ends by avowing that this final act of justice to his would-be victims has been extorted from him by the superior power of God, his own practice in telling the truth not being great.

Esta es la verdad, y yo
La digo, porque Dio mesmo
Me fuerza á que yo la diga
Tan poco enseñado á hacerlo.

With the main plot and incidents of the "Wonder-working Magician" now before us, we are able to arrive at something like a definitive judgment both as to its own merits and its relation to our remaining dramas of free-thought. With regard to the former, the play manifests all the characteristic merits of Calderon's dramatic works. It attests his poetic and many-sided imagination, his marvellous fertility of invention, his masterly plot-arrangement, the incomparable ease, grace, and other redundant beauties of his facile composition. But compared with its kindred dramas, it displays no less forcibly the defects we have already indicated. First and foremost is its deficiency in intellectual power and largeness of mental grasp. Next, and as a result of this primary and most fatal shortcoming, it suffers from general narrowness, religious one-sidedness, excessive other-worldliness, and a perverted and contracted view of human sympathies and interests. Taking the drama, as we very properly may, as a fair test of its author's characteristics, Calderon is seen to be no more than a religious—let us rather say, a papal-dogma—playwright. He has no idea of truth, of justice, of freedom, of humanity, of civilisation, of progress, beyond the circumscribed and mistaken notions of them which he derives from his breviary, no sympathy with them other than the scanty amount permitted by his Church. Indeed, Calderon's feeling with respect to those abstractions and the causes for which they stand would rather be intensely hostile. No doubt

¹ "Als Advocaten," remarks Klein, "nicht Diaboli sondern Dei," *op. cit.*, p. 439.

if we assume that the universe and humanity possessed no other interests or concerns than those with which mediæval Romanism had invested them, that men could have no higher ideas of progress and liberty than those sanctioned by the Inquisition, that the world could attain to no worthier conception of civilisation than that of Spaniards in the seventeenth century, then the "Wonder-working Magician" might stand as a fair representative of that amount of free-thought which would be engendered under such circumstances. But assuming that the universe is greater than the bounds of a Church, however great, that humanity and civilisation are entities inherently gifted with vitality, and with an indomitable determination to employ it in the direction of further light and knowledge, more progress and freedom, then the standpoint of Calderon's drama must be pronounced painfully inadequate and inferior. It may possibly be objected that this stunted development is all we have a right to expect; but while it is all we obtain from Calderon, it is by no means all which we derive from the other free-thought dramas. They are not content with the stature and outlook of their contemporaries and surroundings. They do not regard their own times in the light of a moral atmosphere—a belt of circumambient air whose limits they cannot hope to transcend. Aeschylus, the author of the Book of Job, Goethe, Shakespeare, all have an immeasurably wider range of vision than that of their own age, or than any institution pertaining to their time could have supplied. They and not Calderon are the true Catholics, the genuine world-seers. They look round the universe through the medium of its own pure air and sunlight, not through the distorting vehicle of stained-glass windows and by the dim religious light of a church; they contemplate humanity not by the dwarfish standard of narrow creeds and dogmas and arrested developments, but by its own highest instincts and feelings, and its indefinite capacity for further progress. For them, truth, virtue, and freedom are self-existent and autonomous, to be tested and determined, contemplated and revered each for itself and independently of all preconceived ideas of whatever kind.

As a result of this intellectual feebleness and petty narrowness of scope, all the chief characters of the "Wonder-working Magician" are essentially weak. Cyprian, the Faust of Calderon,

whom we first meet in a suspensive attitude, as halting between the popular mythology and a half-Pantheistic definition of Deity, nowhere approves himself a bold, thorough, or even consistent reasoner. Like Calderon himself, he is utterly defective in intellectual power. Although standing ostensibly on the boundary line between the ancient pagan culture and the early development of Christianity, his ideas are as narrow, his mental outlook and sympathies are as circumscribed, as if he had been brought up in the Spanish Romanism of the seventeenth century. We may indeed take Cyprian as Calderon's embodiment of the extremest latitudinarianism and speculative irreligion conceivable, and this fact reveals to us in their fullest measure the feeble powers and superficial mental character of the greatest of Spanish dramatists. Cyprian's ratiocinations on the subject of Deity are as puny in substance as limited in scope. They consist merely of the more obvious grounds of difference that emerged between paganism and Christianity in the early history of the latter. They are far surpassed in depth and comprehensiveness by the highest speculation, Pagan as well as Christian, of the third century A.D. Indeed, in profundity and boldness the researches of Cyprian do not approach the long-anterior speculations of Job. He stands only at the threshold of religious inquiry, and has no conception of the insoluble mysteries that lie within. Compared with the speculations of Faust, his desires, efforts, and energies are mere child's play. He has but little of Faust's intellectual hunger, his passionate yearning to attain omniscience. His utmost wishes are limited to the reconciliation of Pliny's definition of God with the rest of his pagan creed. Of truth or truth-search in any broad, rich sense of the terms he has no conception. This imperfectly intellectual conformation finds an appropriate accompaniment first in a somewhat superficial and limited imagination. Cyprian, it is clear, has never sounded the depths of human passion and feeling. Even his love for Justina, the great dominating principle of the drama, is brought about by accident and sustained by shallow and unworthy considerations. His occasional attempts at introspection and self-analysis are crude and superficial. No doubt imagination of a certain kind cannot be denied to him. It would be impossible for Calderon to represent any character altogether unadorned by his brilliant and

exuberant fancy, but the imagination of Cyprian, like that of his creator's, is of a limited kind. It is graceful and delicate rather than massive and robust. When the distinction is insisted on it might be said to be nearer akin to fancy than to imagination, meaning that it is deficient in the intellectual element. Another outcome of defective intellect is the general weakness and vacillation of the will. If we except the restlessness which will not remain satisfied with Polytheism, all his subsequent changes are prompted by feeble and insufficient motives. His devotion to magic is due, not, as in the case of Faust, to an invincible devotion to truth and a determination to wrest it from the universe at whatever cost, but only to the desire to gain possession of Justina. His belief in the "Wonder-working Magician," which led to his year's apprenticeship to him and the subsequent blood-signed compact, is based insufficiently on a mere conjurer's exhibition of power over the physical operations of nature. His final acceptance of Christianity, though not altogether devoid of intellectual grounds of conviction, is for the most part influenced by his passion for Justina. His reasons for embracing martyrdom are neither more nor less than the fanatic enthusiasm of a new convert who gains at the same moment a creed and a mistress. Of any intellectual perception of the truth of Christianity, of any worthy appreciation of its ethics, of any insight into its spiritual qualities we have no indication. In a word, Cyprian's character is that of a generous-minded, impulsive, susceptible man, who in passing from Paganism to Christianity is capable of experiencing no enlargement of his mental horizon, no worthy dispassionate expansion of the noblest human sympathies. He starts with being a dilettante pagan and ends with being, so far as intellectual conviction is concerned, a dilettante Christian. A devoted searcher for truth, a clear-sighted lover of truth for its own sake, independently of all unworthy motives and selfish gratifications, Cyprian is not. Perhaps, however, we have no right to expect those attributes in him, for they infinitely transcend the narrow vision-range and limited sympathies of Calderon himself.

But if Cyprian is a puny and feeble representative of free-thought or intellectual unrest, his master, the "Wonder-working Magician," is a no less impotent illustration of the powers of evil: and the weakness in the latter case is the more marked, inasmuch

as the Demon is the Protagonist of Calderon's play. Indeed, of all the literary devils Calderon's demon is indubitably the most infirm, vacillating and insignificant. Although descended, like the Mephistopheles of "Faust" and the Satan of Milton, from their common ancestor of the book of Job, he altogether belies his ancient and high-born parentage. Even his innate malign propensities are rendered more ignoble by the effeminacy and cringing obsequiousness which accompany them. He does not possess the desolating skepticism, the imperturbable *sang-froid*, the unscrupulous ruthlessness of the Satan of Job. He has little of the regal spirit, the stern haughtiness, the defiant pride of Milton's fallen archangel, still less has he the cynical mockery, the spirit of determined, unconditional antagonism to God and goodness of Goethe's Mephistopheles¹—the spirit that persists in denial for the reason that "all that exists deserves not to be".

We first come in contact with this most humble and amiable of fiends in his self-suggested controversy with Cyprian, when he undertakes the advocacy of Polytheism against the doubts of its wavering disciple. He discusses the topic in the gentlest and most apologetic of tones, and seems more eager to strengthen the nascent inclinations of Cyprian towards Christianity than to counteract them. As Immermann rightly remarks: "The intellectual content of the Spanish Faust is not of striking importance, he reaches no further than the Catechism, and the highest matters of the intellect are handled by him in a rather

¹ M. P. Charles in his *Études sur l'Espagne*, p. 79, has instituted a comparison, in some respects rather fanciful, between the Spanish and the German devil: "Le diable Espagnol, le Demonio, ne rit pas; le diable allemand. Méphistophélès, rit toujours. Le diable Espagnol tremble de peur tous les fois que l'on prononce le nom de Jéhovah; le *Teufel* de Goethe raille assez lestement son maître. L'un confesse en murmurant l'unité divine, la toute-puissance du monarque suprême contre laquelle il a osé se révolter; l'autre a fait des progrès; mondain, paradoxal, épigrammatique, il a lu Bayle et ne manque pas de bonnes raisons contre Dieu. Couvrez-le d'un habit pailleté, donnez-lui une tabatière d'or, ce sera le marquis d'Argens. . . . Le diable Espagnol ressemble au cardinal de Richelieu et le diable allemand à M. de Maurepas. Le premier est un roi de ténèbres, le second un Figaro; le premier est un despote le second un intrigant."

superficial manner”.¹ His limited intellectual scope and power, his timid, half-hearted defence of Polytheism, the ease with which he permits Cyprian to obtain the victory, manifested in this scene, afford an insight into his mental ability and resolution which is fully confirmed by the remainder of the drama. Everywhere is he the same contemptible, pettifogging mischief-maker, totally destitute of the courage of his natural viciousness, as well as of the pride and dignity properly pertaining to his supreme position. Although possessing a certain power over the physical operations of nature, his real empire, his sphere of independent sovereignty is so limited that he is little more than a discontented servitor of the Deity. As Klein has pointed out, he has, notwithstanding his pretended sovereignty, much less free-will than that by which Justina overcame his machinations. He never hears the name of God but he shudders with fear. Not only does he admit his inferiority to the Deity, but he proclaims it forcibly and effusively. He is compelled to perform still more self-humiliating acts of recounting, with the submissive air of a confessional *Peccavi*, his malign machinations against Cyprian and Justina. His attitude towards Church dogmas is so deferential and his involuntary homage to the God of the Christians is so marked, as to amount to open confession of Christianity, which in the early history of the Church would probably have sufficed to procure him admission into its fold. Nor is Calderon's Demon weak only in relation to the supreme Being and the dogmas of Romanism; his feeble character is equally apparent in his dealings with his intended victims, Cyprian and Justina. We have already alluded to the readiness with which he succumbs to the reasonings of the former on the subject of Polytheism, but he is no less ready to throw down his arms at Justina's defiant appeal to her free-will and her expression of trust in God. The magical art which he teaches Cyprian is capable of being employed by his disciple in extorting from him humiliating confessions. His device of the phantom Justina is itself a grotesque admission of impotence, while his devices to shut Cyprian's eyes to the non-fulfilment of his part of their compact are in the last degree mean, pitiful and absurd. In a word, Calderon has so far limited the sovereignty and intellect of his Demon, and stultified his methods of action,

¹ Quoted by Klein, iv., ii., p. 408.

that he has virtually deprived him of his traditional origin, for it is quite inconceivable that the pitiful craven who seeks to tempt Cyprian and Justina should ever have had sufficient boldness and intelligence to lead the angelic insurrection, or that he could ever have been a formidable opponent to Omnipotence.

Justina is ostensibly the representative in the drama of dogma or fixed belief, in opposition to the wavering convictions and tentative Christianity of Cyprian, but in truth there is little real difference between the doubter and believer. Cyprian vacillates between Polytheism and Monotheism, but exhibits even in his doubts more than a nascent perception of Christian doctrine. Justina never wavers in her speculative belief, but she is inclined for a time to dally with the insidious assaults of temptation. Hence we have in Calderon's play nothing like the sharp contrasts presented by the other skeptical dramas, between the exponents of dogma and free-thought. We have nothing like the antagonisms that exist between Prometheus and his enemies, between Job and his friends, between Faust and Wagner, between Hamlet and Claudius or Polonius, between Manfred and his associates. Nor can it be said that Justina's creed, so far as it is manifested by her own confessions, is an attractive one, or that it evinces a profound insight into the distinctive character or strength of Christianity. Neither on its speculative or ethical side does Justina display an adequate appreciation of Christ's teaching. Her religion is too much tainted with gloomy fanaticism. It is leavened with the perverse austerity that regarded martyrdom as the sole object of a Christian's ambition, and an all-sufficing expiation for a life of the most depraved character. It is true Calderon has made the ground-principles of Cyprian's conversion : (1) The difficulties of Polytheism ; (2) a lustful passion for Justina ; and these would not have entailed necessarily an examination of the Christian faith or of the best methods of presenting its truths to intelligent and inquiring pagans, still some distinct enunciation of the grounds of superiority which Christianity boasted over paganism might have been expected in a drama which is partially founded upon a juxtaposition of their respective attributes and merits. Those who are conversant with the apologetics of Christianity during the second and third centuries will not need to be told that the defence of Christianity

as against paganism was based on far stronger and broader grounds than those which approved themselves to Calderon's heroine.

In estimating the character of Justina it seems impossible to avoid the oft-mentioned contrast between her and the Gretchen of “Faust”. That their rôles are alike need hardly be pointed out. Both maidens, the Romanist and Protestant, are employed as snares to divert truth-searchers from the object of their quest. But this is the only bond of union between them. In all other respects they present the most violent contrasts. Justina is related to Gretchen as theological grace is to nature. They may stand as embodiments of different and rival eras, for while Calderon's heroine symbolises mediæval Romanism, Goethe's expresses the naturalism of the Renaissance. The first is the outcome of centuries of dogmatic growth and morbid asceticism, the second, of the reactionary movement of an unrestrained and too ardent voluptuousness. As becomes their origin, Justina is the instructress of her lover, although he has spent many years in the pursuit of knowledge, while Gretchen under similar circumstances instinctively recognises the superiority of Faust, and with a charming feminine *naïveté* is only too ready to be instructed by him. In the former case the mastery is accorded to theological, in the latter to secular, wisdom. Among the many detailed contrasts that might be shown to exist between them, perhaps the most significant is their attitude on theological subjects. Justina expounds the doctrines of the Romish Church with the dogmatic tone and grave didactic air of Dante's Beatrice or a divinity professor. Gretchen, when she hears her lover's half-Pantheistic confession of faith, admits with a graceful, confiding readiness that it sounds like the creed to which she has been accustomed. There is a growing contrast between the maidens which attains a climax in their tragical fates. Calderon's nun-like heroine, as if she had taken a vow of perpetual chastity, will only submit to a union with her lover in the “purple nuptials” of a martyr's death, thereby proving how far below her creed she places her love. Gretchen, to her misery, sacrifices everything to her eager, irrepressible affection. Both attain a sublime fanaticism, the one of Divine, the other of human passion.

The whole action of the drama turns upon its chief personages, Cyprian, the Demon, and Justina, hence nothing need be said of its remaining characters.

For sufficiently valid reasons we have classified the "Wonder-working Magician" as a drama of free-thought as manifesting to a certain extent the perennial dissonance between truth-search and dogma; but we have also observed that the scope which Calderon allowed to his treatment of the subject is feeble and limited. We have nothing here of the generous appreciation of all human knowledge which we find in others of our dramas—in the "Prometheus," for instance; nothing of the free movement of human instincts and feelings presented to us by the Book of Job, and less even than nothing of the profundity of truth-search and many-sided speculation that pertain to "Faust". Here knowledge is only regarded under one aspect—it is that amount of truth which exists in the dogmas of Romanism. Of general, secular, mundane knowledge, Calderon is invariably suspicious, as indeed becomes an official of the Holy Office and an ardent Romanist priest. We see this temper manifested on different occasions throughout the progress of the play. Thus he makes the Demon have a special power over knowledge attainment, as if it were of an infernal nature, for when Cyprian declares his determination to solve his doubt the Demon replies that he will hide its solution from him. So when he describes the angelic insurrection, knowledge is put forward as the qualification that entitled him to attempt the usurpation of celestial supremacy. Again, knowledge is connected with magic, as if the latter art, with all its infernal connotations, were only the highest attainment. The same spirit is manifested in Cyprian's confession, after he had become a Christian, of the unsatisfactory results of his studies:—

I am Cyprian, I am he
Once so studious and so learnèd,
I, the wonder of the schools,
Of the sciences the centre;
What I gained from all my studies
Was one doubt, a doubt that never
Left my wildered mind a moment,
Ever troubling and perplexing.¹

¹ Fitzgerald's translation, p. 224.

No doubt this confession pertains to all the dramas of free-thought. That study engenders doubt is a skeptical commonplace, and its recognition as a profound truth is not incompatible with the most untiring and determined search; but Calderon, as we need hardly point out, employs the maxim not as an incitement to knowledge, but as a plea for obscurantism. In short, his standpoint is that of ecclesiasticism, that all truth being comprehended in the creed of the Church, secular knowledge of every kind was a useless if not profane acquisition—a standpoint which may be said to have much to say for itself on grounds of antiquity, as it is, *mutatis mutandis*, the ground of Adam's prohibition with reference to "the tree in the midst of the garden".

But with all its shortcomings, dramatic, philosophical, and otherwise, Calderon's play will always excite and sustain a high degree of interest. In respect of Spanish free-thought it has a special significance. It may be characterised as the high-water mark of religious and philosophical inquiry within the limits of Spanish Romanism. That Calderon represents all that is most distinctive in the religion, the general culture, the manners and usages of his countrymen, it would be absurd to deny. He is a veracious exponent not only of the Spain of Philip IV., but, with slight modifications, of the Spain of the present day. To a philosophical outsider nothing in the recent celebration of the bi-centenary of the poet's death was more striking than the avidity with which his countrymen seized upon those natural attributes which have made him the great poet of his country, together with their sublime unconsciousness of imperfections and shortcomings compared with which the highest altitude of poetic sentiment and imagination is devoid of any durable worth. No greater proof could be advanced than that which Spaniards have themselves proffered by means of their indiscriminating eulogies of Calderon, of the real narrowness, obscurantism, deficiency of broad and liberal culture, which continue to characterise that most benighted corner of modern Europe.

When the regeneration of Spain, of which some maintain the premonitory symptoms are already discernible, has made undeniable progress, we may be sure that the movement will be accompanied by an increasing depreciation of Calderon as the

highest intellect of his country. Not that his real merits will ever be questioned—that is impossible. But Spaniards, emerging from the dark prison cells of the twin giants Ecclesiasticism and civil Despotism, will soon begin to perceive that no amount of poetic imagination, no dramatic versatility or excellence, no degree of grace, tenderness and pathos, no power of versification, can be held to compensate for teachings which, prompted by, have helped to sustain and intensify, bigotry, intolerance, and religious and political servitude.

BY THE SAME AUTHOR.

THE SKEPTICS

OF THE

ITALIAN RENAISSANCE.

Second Edition, Demy 8vo, 10s. 6d.

"An able and even remarkable contribution to the history of philosophical thought. It is based on adequate scholarship and sturdy mental independence. Biographical and critical estimates of much discernment as well as enough high thinking along other lines to give the book a deserved vogue in thoughtful circles."—*Speaker*.

"To commend the scholarship or candour of Mr. Owen to readers of the *Academy* is superfluous. The book is unique in English Literature: a really well-ordered and harmonious history of Italian thought from the thirteenth to the seventeenth century. Mr. Owen might well have styled his book a History of Rationalism, or even of Thought."—*Academy*.

"It is nothing less than admirable, so thorough is the writer's acquaintance with his subject, so fresh his treatment, so vigorous his style."—*Westminster Gazette*.

"The true value of the book remains: a clear, yet profound study of the mental tendencies of those men from whom modern thought, with all its conquests or limitations, has arisen."—*Pall Mall Gazette*.

"Every page overflows with evidence of varied and genuine learning. An immense amount of information is conveyed in a readable and entertaining form; the style, though never over-exuberant, is never dull, and often eloquent or witty. There is abundance of apposite quotations and striking illustration . . . brilliant and interesting volumes."—*Guardian*.

"The Italian Renaissance is conceived quite clearly as a movement of emancipation in thought, essentially unique, but long prepared for beneath the surface of medieval life. Founded on study both of the thinkers themselves and of those who have written on them."—*Athenæum*.

"A great deal of light has been thrown on the causes of the Renaissance and its distinctive characteristics in a very learned and well-written work. The sketches of Giordano Bruno and Vanini of the book are really admirable."—*Westminster Review*.

LONDON: SWAN SONNENSCHN & CO., LD.

BY THE SAME AUTHOR.

THE SKEPTICS

OF THE

FRENCH RENAISSANCE.

Demy 8vo, 10s. 6d.

"It exhibits wide study, considerable power of presentation and exposition, generous sympathies, and a critical faculty which is sensible and informing. The volume will be welcome to all who concern themselves with philosophic inquiry and the history of speculative thought."
—*Times*.

"This is a most difficult book to review ; difficult because it takes us over almost unknown ground, difficult because the writer surveys the ground from a point of view peculiarly his own. In a review of a work like this, mere conventional eulogy is out of place. I can only express my very great admiration of it, and how keenly I feel my incompetence to gauge adequately the learning of which proofs are given on every page."—Wentworth Webster in the *Academy*.

"All the qualities of Mr. Owen's *Italian Skeptics* are plentiful in his present volume. He is excellently well learned, and a writer of vast research."—*Daily Chronicle*.

"Mr. Owen has studied his subject profoundly ; he gives copious references ; he brings to a difficult task an open and candid mind. A highly meritorious piece of work."—*Spectator*.

"Mr. Owen's previous volume on the Italian Skeptics would have been sufficient to establish his credit as an erudite and enlightened critic ; this volume will add to his reputation. We are greatly indebted to writers like Mr. Owen."—*Critical Review*.

LONDON : SWAN SONNENSCHN & CO., LD.

$$\frac{0.3}{t_0} \quad \text{but } (1/2)$$



PLEASE DO NOT REMOVE
CARDS OR SLIPS FROM THIS POCKET

UNIVERSITY OF TORONTO LIBRARY

PN
1647
084

Owen, John
The five great
skeptical dramas of
history

